



Towards assessment of the impact of the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

DATA AND INFORMATION HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2014 STUDY

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List of acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET	Adult Education and Training
AGRISETA	Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority
ANA	Annual National Assessments
ANC	African National Congress
ANT	Actor Network Theory
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AQFC	Australian Qualifications Framework Council
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
BANKSETA	Banking Sector Education and Training Authority
CAS	Career Advice Services
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CATHSSETA	Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority
CDS	Career Development Services
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
CETA	Construction Education and Training Authority
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHIETA	Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DFQEAS	Directorate: Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labour

DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DSSD	Directorate for Standards Setting and Development
ECSA	Engineering Council of South Africa
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education Training Authority
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance
EU	European Union
EWSETA	Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority
FET	Further Education and Training
FoodBev SETA	Food and Beverage Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority
FP&M SETA	Fibre Processing and Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GENFET	General and Further Education and Training
GENFETQA	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GET	General Education and Training
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
GETCA	General Education and Training Certificate for Adults
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQCIS	Higher Education Quality Committee Information System
HEQMIS	Higher Education Quality Management Information System
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
HESA	Higher Education South Africa (renamed Universities South Africa in 2015)
HET	Higher Education and Training
HRDS	Human Resource Development Strategy

HRDS-SA	Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa
HWSETA	Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority
ICE	Intermediate Certificate of Education
ID	Identity (NQF Qualification Identity Number)
IEA	International Engineering Alliance
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LGSETA	Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority
MerSETA	Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority
MHET	Minister of Higher Education and Training
MICTSETA	Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority
MQA	Mining Qualifications Authority
NASCA	National Senior Certificate for Adults
NATED	National Technical Education
NAVCA	National Vocational Certificate for Adults
NBFET	National Board for Further Education and Training
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NCV	National Certificate Vocational
NDP	National Development Plan
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NGP	New Growth Path
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSF	National Skills Fund
NTC	National Technical Certificate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFO	Organising Framework for Occupations
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework

PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
PSETA	Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority
QC	Quality Council
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SAFCERT	South African Certification Council
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASSETA	Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority
Services SETA	Services Sector Education and Training Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
TETA	Transport Education Training Authority
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
UWC	University of the Western Cape
W&RSETA	Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority

Introductory note

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

Why an NQF Impact Study? The effectiveness of the set of policies that regulates education and training in the country needs to be known. Democratic South Africa inherited a racially segregated, unequal, unfair education and training system. Different types of learning did not enjoy equal respect. The South African NQF was designed to integrate this system, make it accessible to everyone and enable quality learning and transparency. There is now one system for all. This system is designed to enable individual development, and contribute to the social and economic development of the country.

What is the South African NQF?

The South African NQF is unique in the world because of its comprehensive range of structures and services that are integrated into a single system to enable easy use by the public. It includes all education and training sectors and quality assurance. The NQF Level Descriptors are transparency tools which make possible the national and international comparability of qualifications. The NQF includes: national policies for registering qualifications and recognising professional bodies; legislated mechanisms to widen access and progression in the form of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT); general NQF Advisory Services, evaluation and advisory services for qualifications obtained outside the country, and Qualifications Verification Services; the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), comprising records of all NQF-related learning achievements in the country; and, information on all NQF qualifications, part-qualifications, accredited education and training providers, RPL providers and registered professional bodies and their designations. There are no other known instances where all of these services are included in a single system.

SAQA's main roles are to advance the objectives of the NQF, to oversee further development of the NQF, and to coordinate the NQF Sub-Frameworks managed by the three Quality Councils. The NQF has the potential to support individual, social and economic development by maximising learning opportunities for all. What impact has the NQF had on the education and training system since the promulgation of the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995)? What progress has there been regarding quality and transparency in this system? What progression has there been regarding redress and learner access and success?

The 2014 NQF Impact Study Report addressed these questions. The NQF has a range of different sectors, role-players and initiatives. In some instances direct links can be drawn between the NQF and certain developments; in others it is difficult to draw clear lines of cause and effect. When the 2014 NQF Impact Study commenced, the NQF organisations were at different stages of development. Some, like SAQA, Umalusi and the Council on Higher Education, had existed for over 10 years. Others, like the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), had only been established for a year. For these reasons, the study was based on three foundational principles.

Foundational principles for the 2014 NQF Impact Study

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

Two ideas central to the study

The first key idea is that the NQF in South Africa is a *means to relate* the different parts of the education and training system in the country – a system that was split into unequal and unfair parts under *apartheid*. The NQF is a means to overcome the class-related divides between the status of differing forms of learning such as academic learning, experiential learning, and education and training. It is a *relational device*. While its form may differ over time, what it consistently aims to achieve are *relationships between* the different parts of the system. Its objectives of integration, access and progression, quality, redress, and individual, social, and economic development, also remain.

The second key idea is that *relational agency* (Edwards 2010, 2014) is needed to implement the NQF. Relational agency requires that people, institutions and sectors work together to achieve national needs, and sectoral and institutional needs within the national context. Relational expertise involves knowledge and skills over and above specialist core expertise. It involves understanding and engaging with the *motives* of others. Relational agency focuses on the common knowledge created through a shared understanding of the motives of others, and going forward together.

This booklet, the full report on which it is based, and workshops around the findings of the 2014 NQF Impact Study are attempts to build common understanding and relational agency in the system. The study itself attempted to achieve these same goals: inputs were provided by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the three Quality Councils. It is important to understand South African NQF impact study work as an opportunity for NQF-related dialogue, collaboration and development.

The research questions

The research questions addressed in the 2014 NQF Impact Study were:

- (1) What is the impact of the NQF on the integration of the education and training system?

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

This booklet

This booklet highlights the key findings from the 2014 NQF Impact Study (SAQA 2015d). It shows that while ideological debates have continued, NQF policies have been developed and implemented, and have impacted on the education and training system.

Recommendations are made for supporting systemic integration and the transparency, quality and redress-related work already under way. Recommendations are also made for monitoring learner access and success trends that are already in the directions desired, and for developmental initiatives as well as monitoring in cases where trends fluctuate over time or are not yet progressing in the directions desired.

Section 1 of the booklet explains why the 2014 NQF Impact Study was conducted, and how the NQF is understood within the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the organisation mandated to oversee the implementation and further development of the NQF. The section goes on to name the main NQF partners and the components of the South African NQF. The section closes by pointing to NQF evaluation studies nationally and internationally considered when embarking on the 2014 study and the methodology and research design used.

Section 2 presents a summary of the analyses (SAQA 2015d) of shifts in understanding and developments relating to redress, learner access and progression, quality and transparency, and systemic integration between 1994 and 2014. It highlights the changing communities of practice, mechanisms, tools and rules in the system, showing the imprint of the NQF in this period. The text is based on data, analyses and inputs from the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), SAQA, the three Quality Councils, the DHET and the DBE. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987, 2001) is used to deepen the analysis.

Section 3 presents summary reflections on the key findings from the study, progress in relation to the Human Resource Development Strategy (RSA 2009a) and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013), and the implications of the methodological choices made.

Section 4 outlines the recommendations from the study, and is followed by some closing comments and a list of references used. It is hoped that the booklet and the larger report on which it is based will serve as a baseline for further research and development.

Dr Heidi Bolton, Director: Research, SAQA

1. Introduction

This section of the booklet explains why the 2014 NQF Impact Study was conducted, and how the South African NQF is understood by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the organisation mandated to oversee its implementation and further development. In the interests of building common understanding the section briefly presents the main partners and components of the NQF in the country. It also points to the national and international NQF evaluation studies considered when the 2014 study was planned, and describes the methodology and research design followed in the 2014 study.

1.1 Why evaluate the impact of the NQF?

After 20 years of democracy, South Africa has made progress in establishing more equal opportunities than existed previously. But widespread poverty, inequality and unemployment remain. Although South Africa's educational performance in cross-country studies is slowly improving over time, the country is still positioned at relatively low levels in international comparability studies such as the *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) (Mullis *et al.* 2001, 2006), the *Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality* (SACMEQ 2010) study and the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS 2008, 2011). There are general complaints about the quality of Basic Education. The country does not have the artisan skills it needs. Throughputs in Higher Education, while moving steadily in the desired direction, are slower than ideal.

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

1.2 What is the South African NQF?

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

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

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

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

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

(3) ensuring that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality.

SAQA and the Quality Councils are mandated to work together towards systemic integration and transparency, quality and international comparability, as well as redress and learner access, success and progression in the education and training system. While each entity exists independently, they are *obliged to work together as parts of a single integrated system*. If any of these entities were absent, there would be gaps in the system. The South African NQF encompasses all education and training sectors in the country, and a comprehensive range of structures and services.

1.2.1 NQF structures

The three coordinated NQF Sub-Frameworks (see Figure 1), each overseen by a Quality Council, are:

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

Figure 1: The South African NQF

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

Legend:

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

1.2.2 Main NQF partners and stakeholders

The main NQF partners are the Minister and Department of Higher Education and Training (MHET and DHET), the Minister and Department of Basic Education (MBE and DBE), SAQA and the three Quality Councils. All entities involved in education and training registered on the NQF, are NQF *stakeholders*.

1.2.3 NQF tools, policies and services

SAQA is mandated (RSA 2008c) to develop the NQF tools, policies and services needed for implementation and development of the NQF. This work is done collaboratively with the two Departments and the three Quality Councils. While SAQA plays a leadership, oversight and coordinating role, collaboration is built, via legislation, into the system. The twin macro-level goals of enabling differentiated approaches and qualifications in the different Sub-Framework contexts, and coordinating these aspects in a single integrated system, are visible at the micro-level of individual policy documents.

1.2.3.1 NQF Level Descriptors

The 10 levels in the South African NQF each have a Level Descriptor. Each Level Descriptor speaks to a set of learning achievements or outcomes, and competencies, which increase in complexity as they progress upwards from one level to the next (SAQA 2012a). The purposes of the Level Descriptors are to ensure coherence in learning, and to enable the allocation of qualifications to particular levels in order to assess their comparability (*ibid.*). The Level Descriptors provide a general scaffold from which more specific descriptors can be developed by practitioners working in the three NQF Sub-Framework contexts.

1.2.3.2 Policy and criteria for registering NQF-aligned qualifications on the NQF

In line with its mandate, after consultation with the Quality Councils, SAQA developed – and is overseeing the implementation of – policy and criteria for the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications.

Based on the type, education and training providers can submit qualifications and part-qualifications proposed for registration on the NQF to one of the three Quality Councils for review. After review, qualifications and part-qualifications are submitted by the Quality Councils to SAQA for registration. The qualifications are then evaluated and registered, subject to mutual agreement that registration criteria have been met. This process ensures alignment with NQF objectives and enables the differentiated approaches of the three Quality Councils.

1.2.3.3 Policy and criteria for implementing the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Credit

Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and assessment

SAQA is also mandated to develop, after consultation with the Quality Councils, policy and criteria for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and assessment (SAQA 2013a, SAQA 2014a, SAQA 2014b).

National policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Two types of RPL are recognised in the *Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning* (SAQA 2013a): 'RPL for alternative access' to programmes of learning for registered qualifications and part-qualifications, for those not meeting formal entry requirements, and 'RPL for credit' towards a registered qualification. There is wide buy-in for this revised RPL policy as it is based on over 15 years of RPL implementation and research in the country, and was developed by a democratically elected, inclusive, representative cross-sector team of experts in a three-year process that included public participation (see Section 2.2.3.1).

National policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)

The CAT policy (SAQA 2014b) provides for credit accumulation and credit transfer, to help learners to move within or across institutions of learning, and to access work. CAT differs from RPL in that it deals with credits obtained in *formal* learning contexts, while RPL involves recognising learning obtained informally and non-formally in the course of living and working (life experience).

Two types of articulation are recognised. *Systemic articulation*, or the joining up of qualifications and learning and work pathways, is based on legislation, national policy and formal requirements, including within and between the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF and State steering mechanisms such as funding and planning. *Specific articulation* is based on formal and informal agreements within the education and training system, mostly between two or more institutions of learning.

National policy for designing and implementing assessment

The overarching national *Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment* (SAQA 2014a) was developed in the context of a range of already-existing national assessment policies. The purpose of this policy is to set minimum standards for all other assessment policies – for effective, valid, reliable, fair, transparent and appropriate assessment in accordance with the NQF Act and international best practice. The policy and criteria were designed to be instructive and enabling, and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. They aim to build shared understanding of a holistic approach to assessment, a range of appropriate assessment types and good-practice assessment principles.

Related Quality Council policies

The Quality Councils have developed Sub-Framework policies in line with SAQA's overarching national policies for RPL, CAT and assessment.

1.2.3.4 Policy and criteria for recognising professional bodies and registering professional designations

The *Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the NQF* (SAQA 2012b) aims to promote public understanding of, and trust in, professions through a nationally regulated system for recognising professional bodies and registering their professional designations on the NQF.

1.2.3.5 System of collaboration

The *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) was developed by the NQF partners to guide mutual relations between SAQA and the three Quality Councils in a way that promotes constructive cooperation, in line with the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008) and the *Regulations for Resolving a Dispute in terms of the NQF Act* (Government Gazette 33483, August 2010). It encourages reasonable action, the prevention of conflict, maintaining good communication relations, accountability and prioritising the NQF.

The *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) includes several integrating devices such as mutual representation of the main NQF partners in each other's structures, the NQF Forum and Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee in which all the main NQF partners are represented, and the CEO Committee comprising the CEOs of SAQA and the Quality Councils.

1.2.3.6 NQF Implementation Framework

Like the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c), the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011d) was developed to enhance systemic integration. It was developed under the guidance of the NQF Forum and is 'owned' by the CEO Committee. It identifies the processes through which SAQA and the Quality Councils will ensure full realisation of their roles. NQF Implementation Framework documents have fixed time frames, each featuring specified priorities for the period concerned.

1.2.4 NQF development

1.2.4.1 Early NQF developments in South Africa

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

One line of criticism of the system focused on the tendency of 'unit standards' to fracture knowledge by dislocating it from its disciplinary bases, and from the communities of practice in which it had been generated (Allais 2007, 2009, 2014). A more widespread critique in the early years focused on the inadequacy of the 'one size fits all' approach, and the perceived complexity of, and excess terminology for, the NQF (French 2009). Submissions to the NQF Review Team included that the centralised standard-setting process was cumbersome and incapable of accommodating the needs of different sub-sectors (DoE-DoL 2002). Concerns were raised around the large numbers of bodies involved in standard-setting/quality assurance, their capacity and relationships with one another, protracted approval processes, the use of 'NQF fields' to classify learning content and the lack of guidelines for Higher Education (*ibid.*).

A number of national reviews took place (Chisholm 2003; DoE-DoL 2002) and there were successive waves of curriculum reform in 2002 and 2007.

1.2.4.2 The NQF review period

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

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

1.2.4.3 Post-2009 NQF developments in South Africa

SAQA and the three Quality Councils

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

Under the NQF Act the existing Quality Councils for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) and Higher Education (the Council on Higher Education – CHE) continued their quality assurance work, but with integrated standards development and quality assurance functions. The third Quality Council, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), was established in 2010 to develop, implement and manage the standards setting and quality assurance of qualifications in the Trades and Occupations sector. SAQA's roles were to advance the objectives of the NQF, oversee its further development and implementation, and coordinate the Sub-Frameworks. SAQA sought to foster communication, collaboration and coordination not only between the three Quality Councils, but between NQF stakeholders in general.

Further moves towards structural integration

In 2009, as part of the move towards an integrated system for education and training in the country, the national Department of Education (DoE) split into the Departments of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Basic Education (DBE). Training was relocated to the DHET where previously it had straddled the National DoE and the Department of Labour (DoL), meaning that all post-school education and training has resided with the Minister of Higher Education and Training (MHET) since 2010.

The full report on which this booklet is based details the experiences of the three Quality Councils in these transitions, in their own words.

1.2.4.4 The transparency and articulation apparatus of the NQF

Several transparency and articulation-related developments commenced under the SAQA Act and intensified after promulgation of the NQF Act.

Learning and work-related advisory services

Before 1994 career-related advice was mainly institution based and differed widely across contexts (SAQA 2013e). This kind of advice remains available to the public. In addition there has been an NQF Help Desk since 2009. While the aim of this service was always to assist the public, a Memorandum of Agreement was drawn up between SAQA and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) following a Ministerial request in 2010, for expanded 'NQF and Career Advice Services' via a multi-

channel approach. This project, which ran from September 2010 to September 2014, was funded by the National Skills Fund (NSF). It included walk-in services for the public as well as assistance via telephone and email, career exhibition events, radio and television broadcasts and social media channels.

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

National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)

The National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) is the electronic management information system of the NQF. Its main component is a relational database which makes the relationships between parts of the system visible – it can be used to enhance relationships between NQF stakeholders. Categories of data housed within the NLRD include but are not limited to:

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

NQF-related information is captured, stored and managed within the NLRD. It is used by decision makers and policy developers, education and training providers, learners and the public in general. Personal learner achievement-related information is carefully managed, through controlled access and fair and transparent processes.

Foreign Qualification Evaluation and Advisory Services

Section 13(1)(m) of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) mandates SAQA to provide an evaluation and advisory service for holders of foreign qualifications. The purpose of SAQA's Foreign Qualification Evaluation and Advisory Services is to verify the authenticity of qualifications obtained outside South Africa and to determine the location of these qualifications within the NQF in South Africa. This service is provided by SAQA's Directorate: Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services (DFQEAS). DFQEAS works with national and international counterparts and partners to fulfil this function. The services are used by employers for decisions regarding prospective employees, by the Department of Home Affairs for the issuing of work visas and by institutions of learning for admissions.

Comparing foreign and South African qualifications

The process for evaluating a foreign qualification includes verification of authenticity and evaluation of the qualification to locate it within the South African NQF. If there is a recognition agreement between South Africa and a foreign country, the recognition decision from the evaluation will reflect the agreed recognition in this formal bilateral agreement.

Where no cross-country agreements exist, an analysis is done of the nature and position of the foreign qualification in its home system. This information is compared with NQF Level Descriptors, qualification descriptors and learning outcomes linked to the closest qualification in South Africa. When a country does not have a qualifications framework, or does not provide for qualifications developed before the existence of its framework, the relative position of the qualifications in the national education and training systems concerned is used for comparison and similarities are *inferred*. The NQF apparatus provides clarity for such comparisons.

Verification Services

Services for verifying the authenticity of learner records (qualifications and part-qualifications held by learners) have existed in South Africa since 1997, with responsibility moving to SAQA under the SAQA Act. After 2009 the Minister of Public Service and Administration made it a requirement for the qualifications of all Public Service employees to be verified. Learner records for all successful achievements in the country are included in the NLRD and are available as follows, with all these processes being fully compliant with the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act, Act 4 of 2013:

- learners can request an NLRD transcript of their own learning achievements;
- employers can submit requests for verification of the learning achievements claimed by prospective employees, as part of pre-appointment job application processes; and
- organisations can request ‘bulk verifications’ for groups or all of their existing employees –these submissions can consist of hundreds or even thousands of records at a time.

‘SAQA VeriSearch’, a service consisting of pre-appointment and bulk verification reports offered online, is only available to subscribing clients (it is not possible to access the record requests of organisations other than one’s own).

1.2.5 Useful tools for understanding the NQF

Since the concept emerged in the 1980s, NQFs have continue to be developed – over 140 of the world’s 242 countries currently have NQFs. NQFs take different forms. At the start they were based on the twin ideas of *competence*, where learners are assessed according to skills they can demonstrate (Bolton and Keevy 2011, 2012), and *outcomes* (Young 2005), where aimed-for *learning outcomes* shape learning. A related idea is that strong divisions between academic and vocational learning create barriers to learning, and that more integrated models are needed (*ibid.*).

Some (Allais 2007, 2009, 2014), have pointed out that much thinking around qualifications frameworks is located in neo-liberal policies that emphasise the primary role of the private sector in economic development. Under SAQA, the South African NQF seeks to articulate education and training for broader developmental goals, and to embed learning outcomes and holistic lifelong learning within human and social development (Walters 2015; Walters and Daniels 2015). The South African NQF has been understood in different ways.

1.2.5.1 Grid or register of qualifications

In South Africa, the NQF is widely seen as a *register of qualifications*, where a grid of specified conceptual levels and types serve as a map for the positioning of qualifications and relationships between them (Bolton and Keevy 2011, 2012). The idea is that the positioning of qualifications in the register makes learning and work pathways visible and available. To realise this potential, the communities of practice developing and delivering the qualifications need to work together.

Internationally the NQFs range in scope from including all sectors in a system, to being confined to single sectors only (Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development 2009). The South African NQF encompasses the whole education and training system; understanding it as a grid can be seen as a narrow 'technicist' view (Isaacs 2011).

1.2.5.2 Device for communication, collaboration and coordination

Raffe (2009) describes several types of NQFs. First, a *communications framework* takes an existing education and training system as its starting point and aims to make it more transparent and easier to understand and use. Second, a *reforming framework* also takes an existing system as its starting point, but aims to change and improve it in specific ways. Third, a *transformational framework* is one designed to enable a new future system.

The South African NQF does not fit neatly into any of these types; it has elements of each. The school curriculum, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, and the occupational sector have undergone deep *transformation* since 1994. The introduction of NQF policies and the focus on access, redress, progression, transparency, integration and inclusivity, show a radical break with the pre-1994 segregated system. Umalusi and the CHE (SAQA 2015d) describe extensive *reforms* in the General and Further Education and Training (GFET), and Higher Education sectors respectively. The shift from a centralised approach under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) to the differentiated coordinated Sub-Frameworks under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), together with collaborative devices like the *NQF Implementation Framework* and the *System of Collaboration*, are elements of a *communications* model. The NQF is however more than a grid or communications framework.

1.2.5.3 NQF as a system

The idea of 'socio-material' (Fenwick 2010a,b,c) is useful in that it links social development with the material contexts in which development takes place. The social and the material 'co-emerge' and shape each other (Varela *et al.* 1991, in Fenwick 2010a).

There is a cluster of theories working with the idea of socio-materiality, including *complexity theory*, *Cultural Historical Activity Theory* (CHAT) and *Actor Network Theory* (ANT) (Fenwick 2010b). What is common in these approaches is that they tend to take whole systems, including human and material elements, into account. Human knowledge and learning are seen as being embedded in material contexts.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987, 2001) provides useful categories for analysing the NQF as a system. The *activity triangle* in Engeström *et al.* (1987, see Figure 2 below) shows a network of relationships between a subject (individual, organisation) and its goals, and the mediating tools, rules, communities of practice and divisions of labour that influence the implementation of objectives (Olvitt 2010). The arrows indicate directions of potential influence.

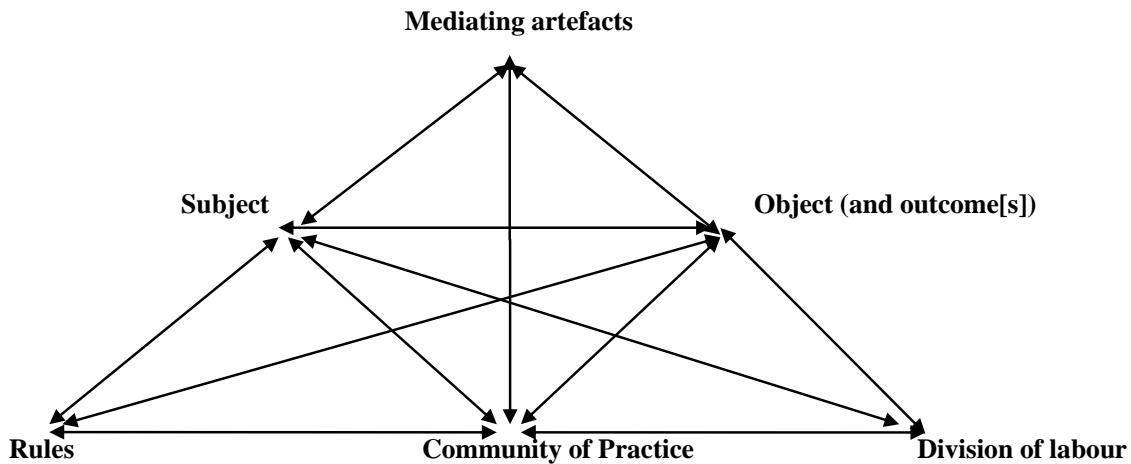


Figure 2: CHAT 'activity triangle' (Engeström 1987)

The elements of activity systems can be summarised as follows (Leontiev 1978; Engeström 1987; Olvitt 2010 drawing on Kuutti 1996):

- **Subjects:** agents who act or agentive entities – individuals, institutions/other collectives that act.
- **Objectives:** individual goals or collective outcomes.
- **Mediating tools:** anything used by subjects ('actors') taking action in a transformation process that mediates the goals sought. Tools can be plans, policies, ideas among others.
- **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.

The NQF can be seen as an activity system. SAQA, the Quality Councils and the two education departments are 'subjects' (actors). NQF implementation is the 'objective' (the sought-after outcome). NQF policies and communities are the mediating tools and agents. However, this picture is too simple. Mukute (2009), Olvitt (2010), Mukute and Lotz-Sisitka (2011) and others have shown how activity systems interact, an idea that is part of 'third generation CHAT' (Engeström 2001). Figure 3 shows the interaction of two activity systems. Figure 4, following a diagram developed by Olvitt (2010), is an example of the interaction of more than two activity systems.

Figure 3: Two interacting activity systems (source: Engeström 2001)

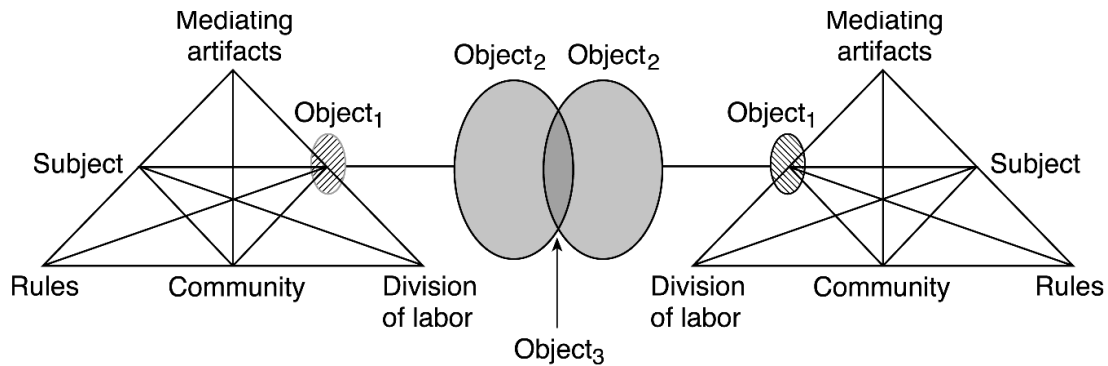
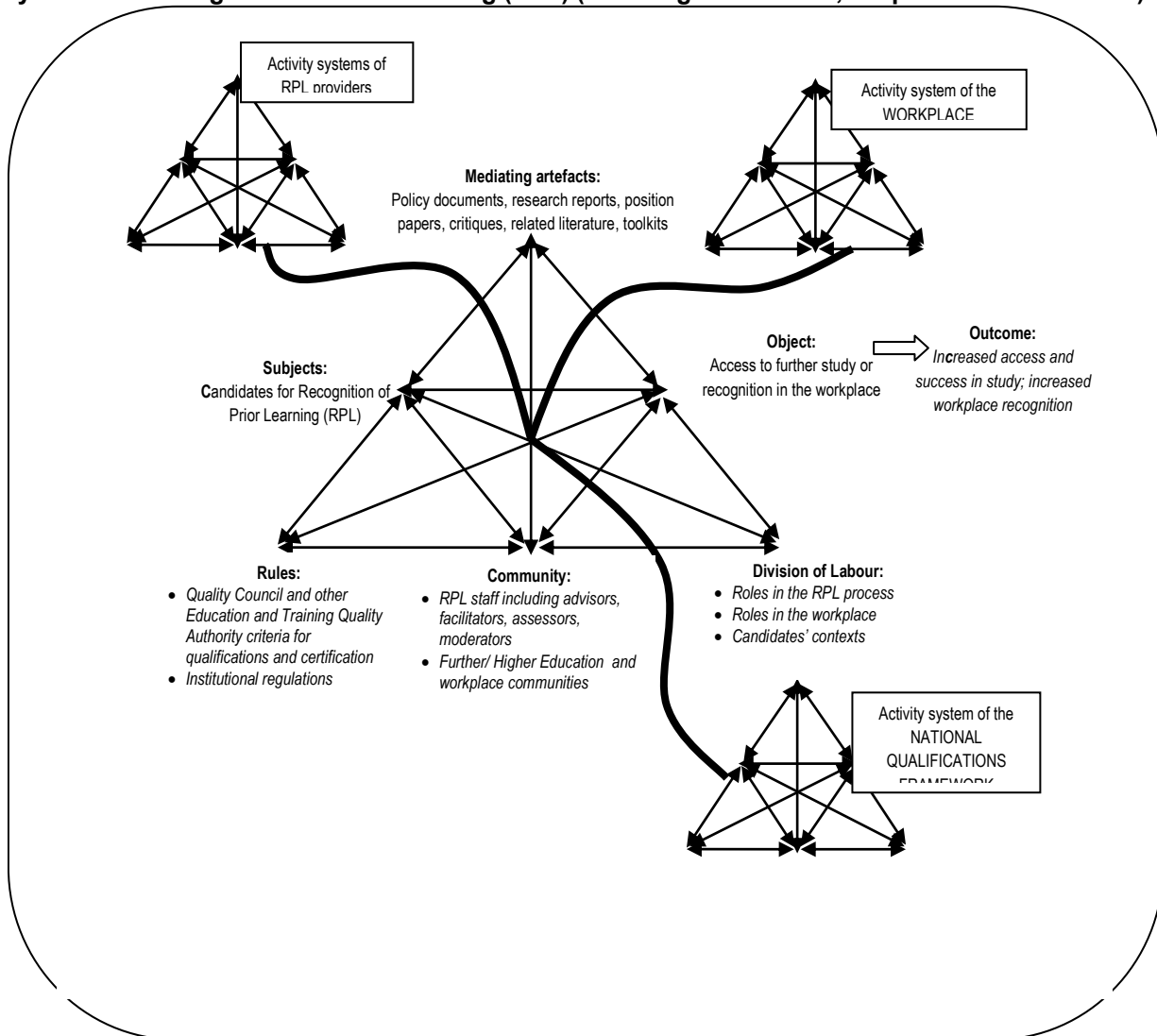


Figure 4: Example of a third-generation CHAT 'activity triangle' showing the interaction of activity systems for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (after Engeström 2001, adapted from Olvitt 2010)



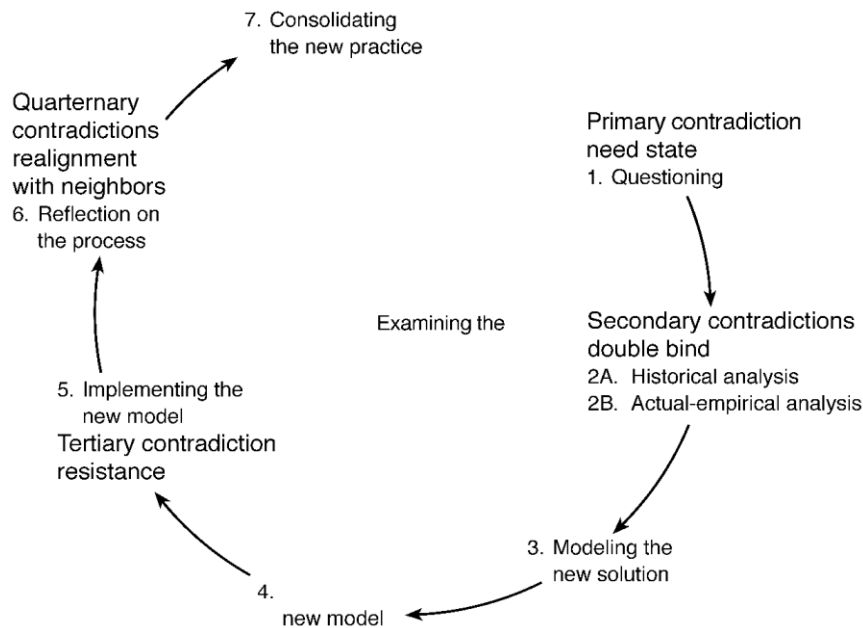
Five CHAT principles including a theory of change

Five principles summarise CHAT (Engeström 2001: 136-137). First, the main unit of analysis is *the collective* – the system. Second, activity systems are *multi-voiced*; that is, they are made up of many different points of view, traditions and the interests of different groups. This diversity is a source of tension and innovation. Third, activity systems are formed and transformed over *extended periods of time*. They can only be understood in context: they need to be analysed in terms of their subjects, objectives, tools, rules, communities of practice and divisions of labour *at different moments in time* – in context. Fourth, *contradictions* are part of what happens in activity systems. Contradictions are sources of learning, change and development. Fifth, there is a possibility for *expansive learning* or *expansive transformation* in activity systems when contradictions are addressed. *Transformation* is accomplished when the objectives/motives relating to an activity are re-conceptualised to include a different or wider set of possibilities than was previously the case. CHAT thus includes a theory of change.

Theory of change: Expansive learning

Expansive learning passes through a number of actions at different stages, creating a *cycle of transformation* (Engeström 2001: 152) as depicted below:

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



In the expansive learning cycle, Engeström's seven actions may be paraphrased sequentially as follows:

- first, some aspects of accepted practice/existing wisdom are questioned or criticised;
- second, the situation is analysed by the questioners as they seek to understand the contradictions or what is lacking in existing practice;
- third, attempts may be made to model new ways of doing;
- fourth, the new model may be critiqued;
- fifth, the new model may be implemented in various ways;
- sixth, there is reflection on implementation of the new model, and evaluation of its success; and
- seventh, the new way of doing is consolidated into a new, accepted form of practice.

1.3 NQF impact studies nationally and internationally to date

In South Africa work was done towards evaluating the NQF in the years 2002-2005 (SAQA 2003, SAQA 2005), 2009-2010 (Taylor 2010), and from 2011 onwards.

1.3.1 Early South African NQF impact study work, 2002-2005 and 2009-2010

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

1.3.2 Immediate post-NQF Act impact study work

In the context of the NQF review, the subsequent development of the *Joint Policy Statement* (DoE-DoL 2007), and the promulgation of the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008), subsequent cycles of the South African NQF Impact Study could not take place as originally visualised. In 2009 SAQA appointed an external researcher to do preparatory work towards the further NQF impact study work (Taylor 2010). This research involved interviews with staff from SAQA and the Quality Councils, focusing on the implications of the new NQF Act for these organisations. It was clear that the different priorities and voices of the NQF organisations called for a theoretical framework that would accommodate their differences and different voices, while enabling the developmental integration work needed.

1.3.3 Lessons from NQF impact studies conducted internationally

At the start of the 2014 NQF Impact Study, three international studies were found – located in Scotland (Scottish Executive 2005; Buchanan *et al.* 2010), Ireland (National Qualifications Authority Ireland [NQAI] 2009), and Australia (Young 2005). A further study was encountered, an International Labour Organisation (ILO) cross-country investigation of the impact of NQFs in selected countries (ILO 2009), but was noted as being a different type of study (being cross-country).

1.3.3.1 Impact evaluation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) aims to make the relationships between qualifications in Scotland clearer; clarify learner entry and exit points, and routes for progression; maximise the opportunities for credit transfer; and assist learners to plan their progress and learning (Scottish Executive 2005). To put these intentions into practice, the SCQF was designed as a comprehensive framework which includes higher education, academic and vocational qualifications, and informal learning. The aim of the Scottish impact study was to understand the knowledge, understanding and expectations of the SCQF, and the impact of the framework on policy and practice.

The approach in the study was qualitative: 69 interviews were conducted with stakeholders who understood the developmental work undertaken; staff in three universities and three Further Education (FE) Colleges that had implemented the new developments; and stakeholder groups of system users in the FE, Higher Education, community-based learning, Vocational Education and Training, advice agency, organised employer and trade union sectors, and other selected employers and professional bodies (Scottish Executive 2005). A large team of researchers was involved in this work.

It was found that knowledge and understanding of the Framework was high within the further and higher education sectors – and among stakeholders who had begun to implement the new system – but limited among general staff, employers and others (*op.cit.*). Two ways forward were recommended, one involving the SCQF being an ‘enabling’ or ‘communications’ framework – an instrument of change; the other being a more extensive remit in which the Framework was itself an agent of change (Scottish Executive 2005: 73). The study was perceptions based. While it did not draw extensively on other kinds of data, its strength lay in the high number of interviews conducted, and in the variety of stakeholders included. The size of the research team and length of time allocated for the research made this work possible.

1.3.3.2 Impact evaluation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) of Ireland

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in Ireland was introduced in October 2003. Five years on, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) took stock of the extent to which the NFQ had been implemented and had impacted on the education and training system (NQAI 2009). The NQAI commissioned an international study team to undertake this research on its behalf in a five-year investigation.

The overarching objective of the NFQ is to support lifelong learning and a cultural shift towards recognising the needs of learners of all ages (NQAI 2009). Its aims are to promote flexibility and integration in respect of qualifications, develop new pathways, establish learning outcomes as the common reference points for qualifications and respond to the qualification needs of individuals, society and the economy (*ibid.*). The aims of the impact study were to assess the extent to which the NFQ was being implemented, and support deeper implementation of the NFQ and policies on access, transfer and progression. The study was based on inputs from a variety of sources including the following:

- A background paper prepared by the NQAI on the development, implementation and impact of the NFQ.
- Reports from key stakeholder bodies responsible for implementing the NFQ, and engagement with stakeholders.
- Two case studies – in the areas of nursing and guidance/counselling respectively – selected each of these areas involving a wide range of sectors.
- A public consultation process in which agencies and individuals contributed submissions and took part in a consultative forum.

The study found that the NFQ had established itself with a high level of prominence and visibility on the landscape of Irish education and training (NQAI 2009: 20). The NFQ was found to have made an impact for learners by promoting access and pathways between qualifications and a language to use when making choices in education and training; it was found to have encouraged new approaches to learning, teaching and assessment; and it had stimulated provision in new areas, opened opportunities for transfer and progression, and encouraged new career routes – although developments were at early stages (NQAI 2009: iv). Developmental areas were also identified (*ibid.*: 32).

Emerging themes, many of which had also been found in Scotland and New Zealand, and which resonate in the South African context, included:

- the need for time to develop familiarity and understanding, promote cultural change and establish the mutual trust essential for an effective NFQ;
- the importance of stakeholder involvement and partnership;

- the need for an iterative process of development in which the existing education and training system and the NQF are progressively aligned with each other;
- the need for an NQF to be 'loose' enough to accommodate different types of learning, and to accommodate differences across sectors of education and training; and
- the need for a balance between implementation within sectors and the development of coherent system-wide arrangements (NQAI 2009: 50).

The methods, as well as the findings and recommendations of this study were relevant for the 2014 NQF Impact Study, and were adopted as far as the smaller research team and tighter time frames would allow.

1.3.3.3 Impact evaluation of the proposed strengthened Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

In 2009 the Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQFC) released a series of consultation papers outlining how the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) could be strengthened. In 2010 it circulated draft policies to effect these changes. In 2010 an evaluation was needed of how the strengthened AQF was likely to impact on and be affected by education and labour market structures and processes.

A theoretical approach based on the concepts of 'similarity and difference' (Young 2005) was used to project the likely impact of the proposed changes, in four sectors – secondary schools, vocational education and training (VET), higher education and industry. For each sector, the key issues and likely impacts of changes were identified and documented, and the roles of agents and possible actions they could take were analysed. 'Direct actions' and 'facilitated activities' were then identified as ways of addressing the impact of the changes.

This analysis was used to identify key principles for an evaluation of the AQF; key roles for the AQF; research questions for evaluating the AQF; and the analytical foci and data needed (Buchanan *et al* 2010: 49). While these methods could not be used in the 2014 South African study, the approach of using formative and summative research questions and the sources of data identified, to some extent influenced the selection of broad indicators in the South African study.

1.3.3.4 Overarching lessons from the international studies

Three main lessons emerged from the international NQF impact studies. Firstly, the all-encompassing purposive sampling utilised in the Scottish (SCQA 2005) and Irish (NQAI 2009) studies was useful to generate the range of views needed. Secondly, for credibility, it was important to triangulate data as thoroughly as possible.

Thirdly, it was clear that even although analysis of NQFs is complex and "seldom enjoys the existence of a clear baseline with regard to well-developed indicators" (Allais 2009: 11), indicators as measures are crucial for an assessment of the impact of the NQF in a country. What matters is the *type* of indicator used and its clarity, validity, reliability, measurability, interpretability and feasibility. Apart from impact indicators (ILO 2009; NQAI 2009), there are contextual indicators (such as social class or national patterns), input indicators (such as human, infrastructural or financial resources), process indicators (relating directly to organisational processes) and output indicators (such as learner results).

The *timing* of a study is also significant. Taylor (2010) suggests that in the first two years of implementation, measurement of the *architecture* of an NQF is possible; in fairness two to five years are needed before the effectiveness of *implementation* can be attempted; and five to ten years before

impact can be assessed. This understanding is supported by the foci of the Scottish (SCQA 2005), Irish (NQAI 2009) and Australian (2010) studies in relation to the developmental stages of the frameworks studied.

1.4. Methodology and research design

Given the size of the research team and time-frame for the 2014 NQF Impact Study in South Africa, attempts were made to build on the lessons of earlier work in the country and from the international studies, while not necessarily being able to replicate the approaches fully. In some respects such as systemic integration and transparency, the impact of the South African NQF on the education and training system in the country was clearly and directly visible. For other aspects with additional intervening factors, like the trends in learner achievements, it was not possible to draw direct lines of cause and effect.

1.4.1 Approach

The approach adopted for the 2014 study was thus three-fold. Firstly, a Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) analysis was conducted of NQF policy development, implementation and impact – over time. Using the CHAT categories, the changing subjects, tools and rules used, and the communities of practice and divisions of labour involved, were considered. The analysis was designed to show the imprint of the NQF on the education and training system at particular moments in time.

Secondly, trends in redress and learner access, success and progression *happening at the same time* as the implementation of NQF policies under the SAQA and NQF Acts were analysed. While there are clear links between many of the redress initiatives, and the numbers of learners benefitting from them, there is not necessarily a direct link between patterns of learner access, success and progression, and high-level NQF policies. There is clearly a *general* link, together with many mediating interventions in the implementation contexts of individual institutions of learning. In these cases, it is argued that particular learner achievement patterns were associated with the NQF developments in the periods considered.

Thirdly, the focus of the study was on the implementation of the NQF, on the effects of implementation.

1.4.2 Indicators used

Given the different developmental stages of the leading NQF organisations at the start of the 2014 NQF Impact Study, and the need to enable evaluation of related phenomena over time, ‘stretch indicators’ were needed. The two indicators used were those of *systemic coherence or integration*, and *beneficiary gain*. Both indicators had potential to enable evaluation of related phenomena over time.

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

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

1.4.3 Voices, histories and analyses

1.4.3.1 Voices, histories

Following the example of the Irish impact study (NQAI 2009), attempts were made to gather data using a range of research tools, and to triangulate data – on a smaller scale. NQF developments, histories and voices, and their effects on the system, were captured in narrative form by staff from SAQA and the Quality Councils, with inputs from staff of the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Basic Education.

Detailed written inputs were obtained from 10 senior staff members of SAQA and the Quality Councils after open-ended discussions around the key themes. The lead researcher engaged with these writers around the inputs, until the narratives were clear from an ‘outsider’ point of view. Substantial analyses of developments within the three Sub-Framework contexts were provided by the three Quality Councils in this way.

1.4.3.2 First-level analyses

All readily available data and existing first-level analyses showing patterns regarding redress and learner access, success and progression over time were sourced from the available national databases: the National Learners’ Records Database (NLRD), the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the Higher Education Quality Management Information System (HEQMIS), publications issued across a number of years by the Departments of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Basic Education (DBE), SAQA’s line function datasets and inputs from the Quality Councils. Documents and the quantitative data were analysed.

1.4.3.3 Second-level analyses

Second-level analyses – using the CHAT categories of ‘subjects’ (NQF institutions), objects (NQF objectives), tools and rules, communities of practice and divisions of labour – were conducted for three different moments in time. The first was 1994-1995, the onset of democracy in South Africa; the second 1995-2007 under the SAQA Act; and the third, 2008-2014 under the NQF Act of 2008. Analysis of the shifts between these periods was conducted in an attempt to show the impact on the education and training system of implementing the NQF.

1.4.4 Triangulation

Triangulation was sought in two ways. The first was through juxtaposing the accounts of SAQA and the main NQF partners, including the three Quality Councils and the Departments of Higher Education and Training and Basic Education. The main partners were given opportunities to engage with the texts developed by the other partners. Secondly, triangulation was also sought by juxtaposing data and data analyses from different sources.

1.4.5 Timing of the study

By the time the 2014 NQF Impact Study was being reported, South Africa was in its 18th year of NQF implementation. NQF institutions had however around four years of implementation under the NQF Act, which was promulgated on 1 June 2009, and for which some of the institutions were set up in 2010 – thus providing a period suitable for assessment of its architecture and implementation (Taylor 2010). Emphasis in the 2014 study was on the impact of shifts in NQF structures and policies developed and

implemented, the impact of shifts in understandings achieved and, where possible, the impact on systemic integration, transparency and beneficiary gain.

2. Findings: Imprints of the NQF

Section 2 presents a summary of the first and second-level analyses (SAQA 2015d) that show the imprint of the NQF on education and training in South Africa between 1994 and 2014.

2.1 Imprint of the NQF on understandings of, and developments relating to, systemic integration and articulation in education and training

2.1.1 1994-1995

2.1.1.1 *Support and dissent*

At the onset of democracy in South Africa the education and training system was deeply segregated along racial lines. Learning opportunities and privileges were distributed according to population group. In 1994 as the SAQA Act was being developed, the intention was that the NQF would achieve the demographic and learning related integration needed.

2.1.1.2 *Understandings and debates around integration in the early years*

There was recognition that integration was “complex and challenging” (French 2009: 44). There was opposition to the idea, manifest in the failure to integrate the then-Departments of Labour and Education, and the “irreconcilable differences” between leaders of academic learning, and training (*ibid.*). There were also forces supporting integration, those who saw the separation of academic education and vocational training under *apartheid* as having detracted from each and fueled social class structuring (French 2009: 72; Lugg 2009: 48).

Integration was officially expressed as bringing ‘all learning under a single framework of outcomes-based standards and qualifications’ (DoE-DoL 2002). The very visible debates around what systemic integration meant and how it was to be achieved, were indicators of the early impact of the NQF (see Section 2.1.3.3).

2.1.2 Under the SAQA Act

2.1.2.1 *Different understandings of the NQF*

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). There were different understandings of the NQF. Some saw it as being the Level Descriptors and the approved registered qualifications and unit standards. Others understood it to be all the activities of SAQA, or of SAQA and the range of partners involved in delivering education and training, or as the achievement of NQF objectives (*ibid.*).

2.1.2.2 *Integration tool: radical restructuring*

The NQF impacted on the education and training system under the SAQA Act, in the form of radical *structural* integration *within* the sub-sectors making up the system. The 17 education departments, each

with differing curricula, were integrated into a single National Department of Education with provincial counterparts and national curriculum statements for each school subject. The public Further Education and Training (FET) sector (currently referred to as Technical and Vocational Education and Training [TVET]) was integrated, as was public Higher Education and Training (HET), through rationalisation of the institutions in each sector. In the Trade and Occupations sector there was a single national system for standard setting and quality assurance for the first time, but a proliferation of bodies to do this work (DoE-DoL 2002).

2.1.2.3 Different voices on integration

While there were known barriers in learning pathways that crossed the academic and vocational divide (Cosser 2009; Carrim 2010), *structural* integration continued, and there were instances of learning pathways across sectors (Carrim 2010). The NQF impacted on public thinking, focusing general debates on systemic integration and the NQF objectives (DoE-DoL 2002). The first ten years of NQF implementation saw a narrowing in the differences in views held by the Departments of Education and Labour, which paved the way for the creation of the *Joint Policy Statement* (*ibid.*; see also Section 1.2.4.3). In academic discourse, the ideas of, and work relating to, learning pathways, and blockages in these pathways, emerged (Cosser 2009; Carrim 2010).

2.1.3 Under the NQF Act

2.1.3.1 Further structural integration

Addressing the barriers to the integration of education and training under the SAQA Act could be seen as an example of what Engeström (2001) terms ‘expanded learning’, manifested in the *Joint Policy Statement* (DoE-DoL 2007) and subsequent establishment and implementation of the NQF Act. Further structural changes resulted, 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 1.2.4.3). Under the NQF Act the differentiated forms and contexts of learning were acknowledged. Each was given equal weight in the form of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks. Professional bodies and their designations were also integrated into the NQF via policy (SAQA 2012b).

2.1.3.2 Integration tools

NQF Level Descriptors and the NQF suite of policies

The NQF Level Descriptors (see Section 1.2.3) proved to be a mechanism for developing coherence within and across the three Sub-Frameworks (CHE, QCTO, Umalusi, in SAQA 2015d: 301-379), echoing international trends (Keevy and Chakroun 2014). When overseeing the development of new qualifications for registration on the NQF by SAQA, the Quality Councils have consulted around – and SAQA has ensured – articulation with existing qualifications (SAQA 2013c; Umalusi in SAQA 2015d: 251-2).

National policies for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) (SAQA 2014b) and for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (SAQA 2013a), supported alternative access to, and transitioning in, the system (Cooper and Ralphs 2016; SAQA 2015a,b and 2014a). These policies were collaboratively developed by SAQA after extensive consultation with the Quality Councils and other NQF stakeholders, and there was buy-in to a considerable extent from stakeholders (*ibid.*). Increased buy-in and the sharpened focus in research into RPL could be seen when comparing the national RPL workshops of 2010, 2011 and 2014. The

numbers of delegates participating in these events rose from 200 in 2010 to over 400 in 2014. The focus of these workshops shifted from identifying barriers to expanding existing islands of excellent practice in 2010, towards *addressing* the main barriers to a national system in 2011. Following the delegate-supported 'Resolution and Working Document on RPL', revision of national RPL policy, Ministerial RPL Task Team work on legislative barriers (MHET 2012) and strategic national RPL initiatives (SAQA 2015a,b), the focus of the 2014 workshop was on 'Tried and tested tools and templates' (SAQA 2014c) (see also Section 2.2.3.1).

National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)

The National Learners' Records Database (see Section 1.2.4.4) became an integrating device by showing the relationships between qualifications, part-qualifications, professional bodies and professional designations, education and training providers accredited to offer registered qualifications and part-qualifications, and learner enrolments and achievements.

Draft Articulation Framework

A Draft Articulation Policy was developed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in 2014. This policy sketched some of the remaining structural constraints in the current basket of education and training policies and context, clarifying where agency was needed.

2.1.3.3 'Knowledge wars' and integration: debates under the NQF Act

NQF debates have been located insightfully by Walters (2015) within the larger and century-old 'knowledge wars' (Fenwick 2010d; Muller 2009). Some (such as Allais 2014) argue for a disciplinary knowledge-based approach to curriculum and 'disciplinary specialisation of consciousness'. Others (like Cooper and Harris 2011; Cooper and Ralphs 2016) point to 'knowledge differentiation', exploring how different forms of knowledge could be mediated (Walters 2015). On one side of the debate, the value of everyday knowledge is not explicitly valued. On the other it is validated, which is an approach important for adult learners in particular, and for social justice where many have been 'economically, politically or culturally excluded' (*ibid.*). In order to be registered on the NQF, qualifications have to make RPL and CAT options explicit (CHE 2015; QCTO 2014; SAQA 2013c; Umalusi 2014).

2.1.3.4 Research into integration

Research into learning pathways and articulation

Post-2009 research deepened understandings of 'learning pathways' and 'articulation', which were understood in an expanded number of ways. Articulation was 'systemic' in the form of joined-up qualifications, or 'specific' via arrangements between two or more institutions of learning, or comprised the learning and work routes followed by individuals as they were supported by the system (Lotz-Sisitka *et al.* 2012, 2013; Lotz-Sisitka and Ramsarup 2012, 2014; Ramsarup and Lotz-Sisitka 2013; Lotz-Sisitka 2015). The flexibility and responsiveness of institutions of learning to students' learning-related needs were recognised as being central in an integrated system (Abrahams 2014; SAQA-UWC 2015a,b; Walters and Daniels 2015; Walters *et al.* 2015;). The concept of 'transitions' was recognised, when a learning pathway involved moving from training to work, from work to training, from school or college to higher education, and so on (Lotz-Sisitka 2015). Career advice services were recognised as enabling articulation (CEPD 2012) and national services were developed in the country (see Section 1.2.4.4).

NQF research conferences

The national NQF conferences of 2010 and 2013 (SAQA 2010b, 2013b) respectively reflect an increasing focus on, and deepening understanding of, articulation and integration. The 2010 conference – *Towards a map of NQF-related research* – included sessions on research for the full range of NQF objectives. The 2013 event – *Building integration and articulation* – focused entirely on these aspects, acknowledging the central roles of educational quality and advice (SAQA 2013b).

National NQF conferences and workshops were in themselves integrating mechanisms, and included delegates from all sub-sectors of the NQF, business and labour, and engagement around the developing edge of NQF implementation. The formats and processes at the events were designed to maximise delegate exposure to a range of ideas, and in-depth engagement with these ideas.

2.1.3.5 Communities of practice for integration

There was implicit and explicit acknowledgement that collaboration between NQF role-players is essential. Material examples include the collaboratively developed *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c), the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011d), and the suite of NQF policies developed by SAQA in consultation with the Quality Councils and stakeholders in the three NQF Sub-Framework contexts (SAQA 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2014a, 2014b). A SAQA-hosted workshop on ‘Relational Agency’ (Edwards 2014) was well-supported by NQF partners at high levels of authority in the system (SAQA 2014c).

2.2 Imprint on redress

The NQF focused public attention on redress in education and training for the first time and shaped the way in which redress was understood and implemented.

2.2.1 Understandings and developments relating to redress: 1994-1995

From the start, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was central in policies and practices to achieve redress of past injustices. The purpose of RPL was to ensure that marginalised workers gained recognition for knowledge and skills acquired through years of experience in workplaces (COSATU 2000). When the NQF was established, attempts began to be made to understand *what, how, when* and *where* RPL processes were to take place.

2.2.2 RPL under the SAQA Act

National RPL Policy (SAQA 2002) and RPL Criteria and Guidelines (SAQA 2004a) were developed by SAQA in accordance with the SAQA Act, with contributions from national and international RPL experts. The RPL process was understood to be generic and applicable across all education and training contexts. 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 an *ad hoc* manner, 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 (OECD 2009) confirmed that South Africa was one of five countries in the world that had ‘islands of excellent practice’ with respect to RPL. Only four countries were ahead of South Africa at the time, in that they had elements of national RPL systems or ‘quasi-systems’.

2.2.3 RPL under the NQF Act

2.2.3.1 New RPL tools and communities of practice

RPL conferences as tools and drivers of new communities of practice for RPL

In 2010 SAQA hosted a national workshop in an attempt to identify and understand the barriers to development of a national RPL system in South Africa. The barriers identified – 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 took cognisance of differences in the RPL processes in different sectors (see also Section 2.1.3.2).

RPL research as a tool

SAQA-University of the Western Cape (SAQA-UWC) partnership research at the time *Towards a maximally inclusive RPL model* (Cooper and Ralphs 2016) had already developed a model that embraced sectoral differences in RPL. The needs 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; and *candidate feedback*, among other aspects, formed part of the *inclusive* model. Importantly, this model accommodated and enabled different RPL purposes and different types of RPL processes.

RPL policy development and implementation as a tool

The new *National Policy for the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* (SAQA 2013a) was 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 developed *RPL Success Cases, Volumes 1 and 2* (SAQA 2015a, 2015b), which replaced the generalised toolkits used under the SAQA Act, with examples of nuanced RPL processes that have led to successful initiatives in particular sub-sectors.

2.2.3.2 Data on RPL achievements

While there may not have been the large numbers of RPL candidates initially envisaged, it is worth noting that there were more qualification achievements that included RPL processes, than are recorded as ‘via RPL’ in the NLRD. Before November 2013 the uploading of RPL data was voluntary; after publication of the revised national RPL policy (SAQA 2013a), it became mandatory. Communication with around 150 RPL providers listed in the NLRD suggests that there have been in the region of 150 000 successful RPL candidates between 2002 and 2011. Post-2011 strategic national RPL initiatives (SAQA 2015a,b) have opened the way for more than a further 200 000 candidates, if the processes and tools created are used. Figure 6 shows a comparison between qualification achievements in *NLRD Report 3* (SAQA 2013d) with a subset of these records, which were achieved via RPL.

Figure 6: Comparison between qualification achievements in NLRD Report 3 with the subset of these records, which were achieved via RPL (source: NLRD)

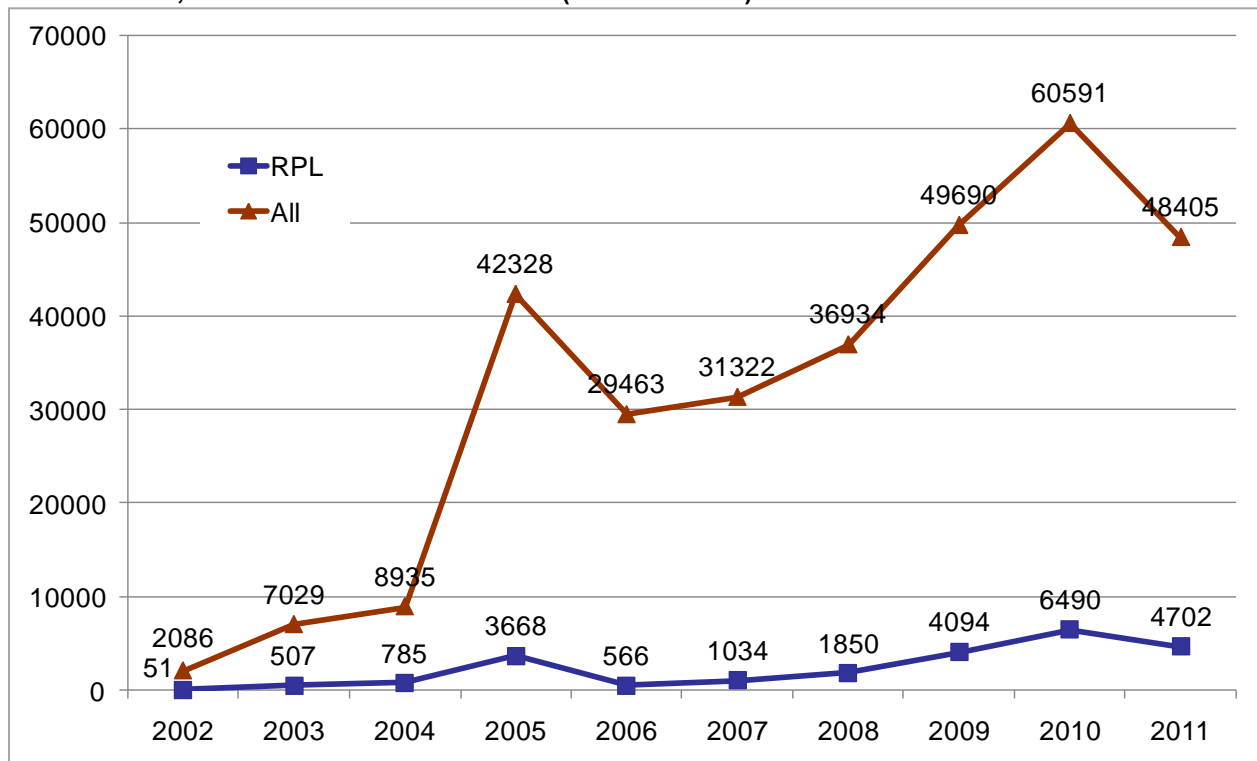
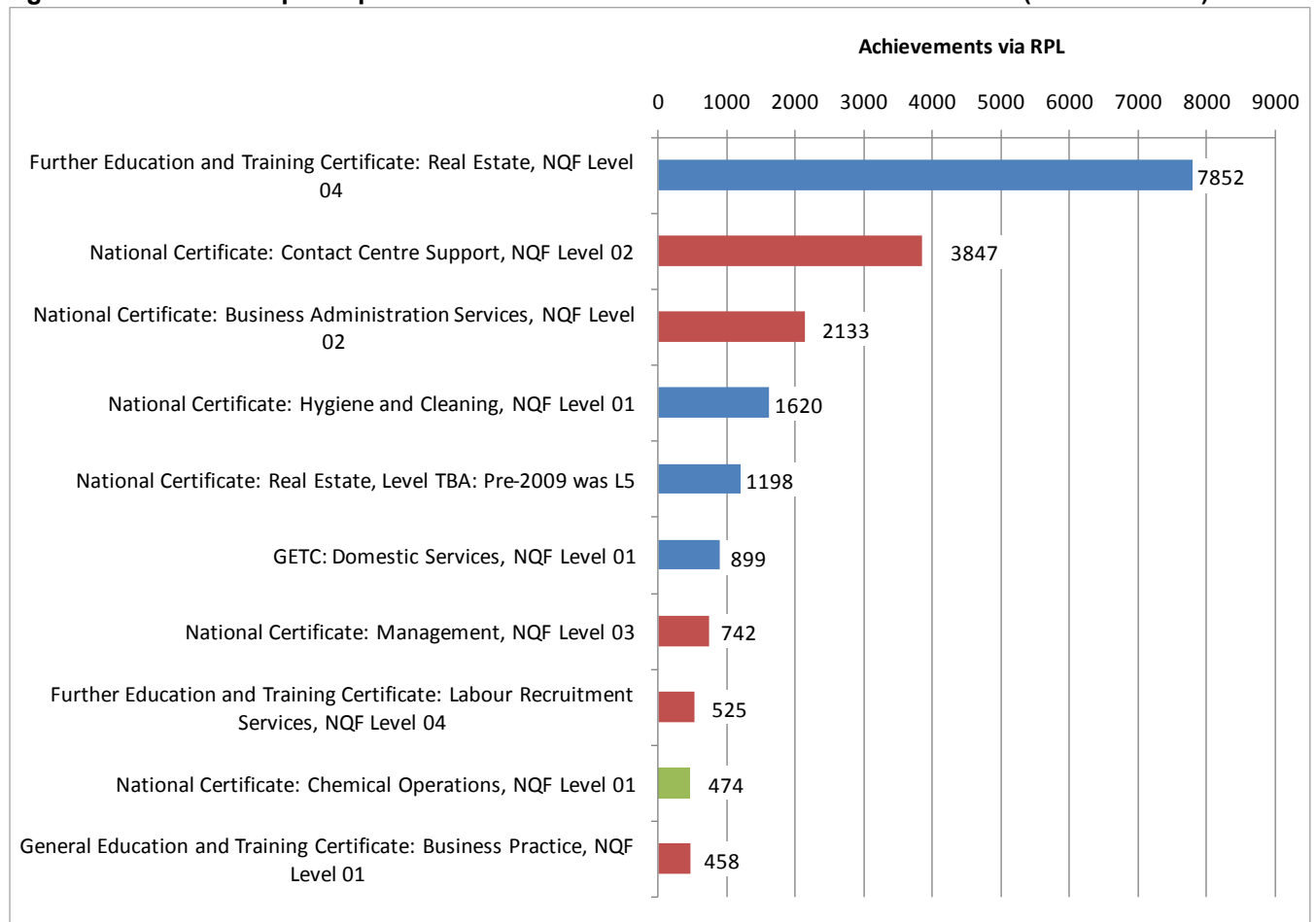


Figure 7 shows NLRD records of the ten most popular qualifications achieved via RPL between 2002 and 2012, and the number of achievements for each qualification.

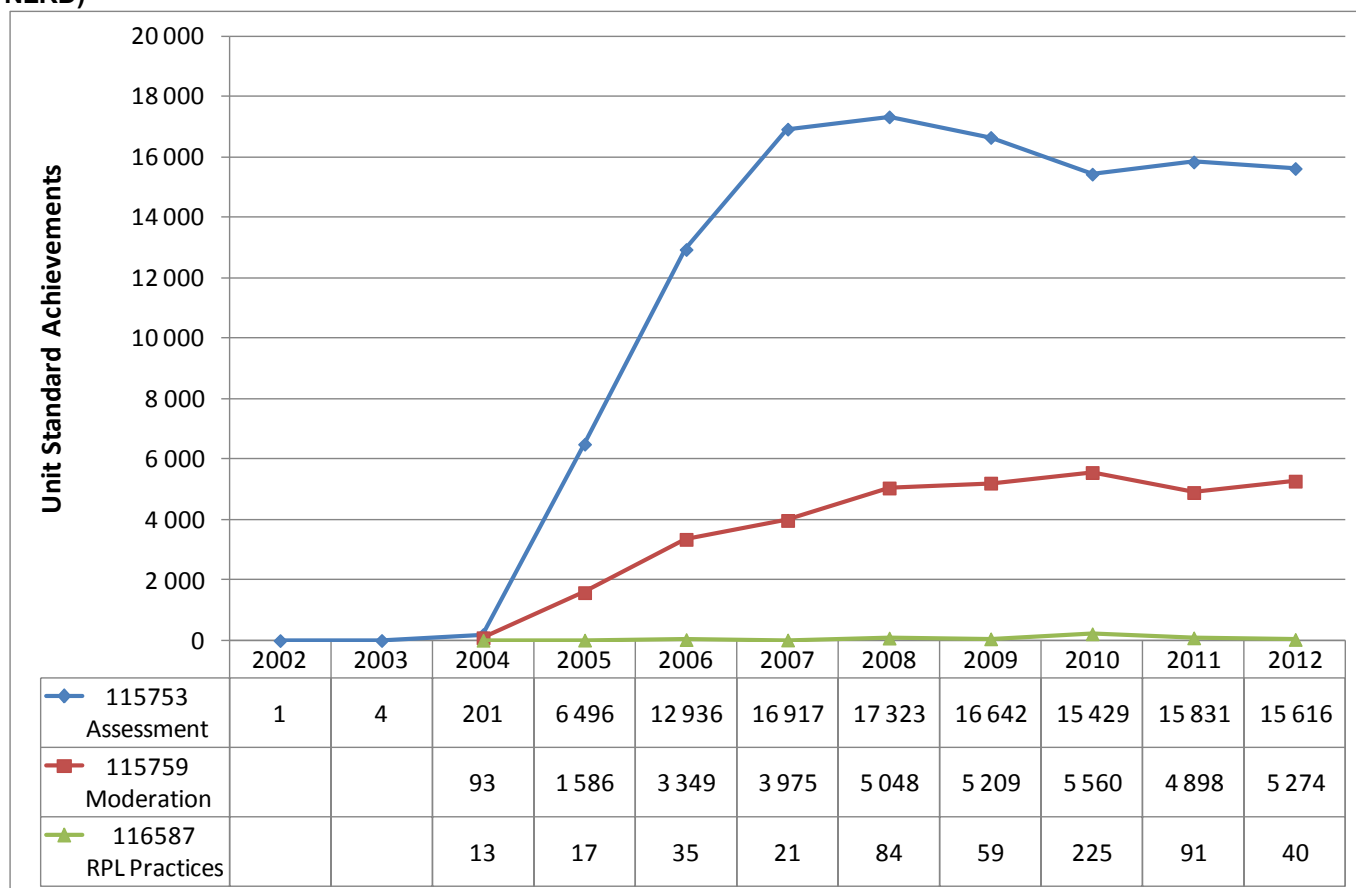
Figure 7: Records of top ten qualifications achieved via RPL between 2002 and 2012 (source: NLRD)



■ Field 11 - Services ■ Field 03 - Business, Commerce and Management Studies ■ Field 06 - Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology

Figure 8 shows trends in the uptake of three Unit Standards related to RPL practices between 2002 and 2012. Completion of these Unit Standards – for assessment, moderation, and RPL practices respectively – could be interpreted as suggesting the qualification holders’ intentions to assess learner achievements via RPL. While there was little uptake of the RPL Practices Unit Standard, there were steady increases in the Unit Standards for assessment and moderation.

Figure 8: Achievement of Unit Standards relating to RPL practices between 2002 and 2012 (source: NLRD)



2.3 Imprint of the NQF on understandings of learner access, success and progression

2.3.1 Under the SAQA Act

The focus under the SAQA Act regarding access to education and training was initially on enabling all learners – regardless of population, gender or other group categorisation – to gain *physical access* to institutions of learning in an integrated system. The figures that follow show that numbers of learners accessing the system increased over time. Further, the *proportions of learners* in particular population groups generally moved towards being more aligned with proportions of people in particular population groups in the general public, over time. The figures also show that after about 10 years of NQF implementation, the focus in the data shifted to ‘deep access’, or learner throughput and success rates.

2.3.2 Under the NQF Act

The available data and analyses, summarised below, show patterns in redress and learner access, success and progression.

2.3.2.1 Physical access to school 2008-2014

Overall enrolment in schools in proportion to numbers in the population

Table 1 shows the numbers of learners enrolled in ordinary public schools for the years for which data were readily available, compared with numbers in the corresponding age groups in the general population. 'Over-enrolment' in Grades 1 and 10 may be due to learners being held back or choosing to repeat the grade. Percentages of Grade 11-12 learners declined sharply in relation to their cohorts in the general population.

Table 1: Numbers of learners enrolled in ordinary public schools in 2006; 2009-2011, compared with the corresponding age groups in the population (sources of data on which calculations are based: DoE 2008, DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b¹)

Year	Grade -R (%)	Grade 1 (%)	Grade 10 (%)	Grade 11 (%)	Grade 12 (%)
2006	441 587(44)	1 185 198 (108)	1 093 297 (109)	890 564 (90)	568 664 (58)
	999 331	1 000 596	997 200	988 227	978 710
2009	620 813 (60)	1 106 827 (107)	1 017 341 (97)	881 661 (85)	599 626 (58)
	1 035 221	1 037 462	1 046 444	1 042 376	1 034 380
2010	707 203 (66)	1 116 899 (105)	1 039 762 (100.2)	841 815 (82)	579 384 (57)
	1 063 880	1 066 387	1 037 439	1 027 731	1 016 659
2011	734 654 (69)	1 177 089 (108)	1 094 189 (105)	847 738 (82)	534 498 (52)
	1 058 162	1 061 609	1 044 695	1 036 647	1 026 916

Legend:

BLACK = Numbers of learners enrolled

RED = Numbers of people in the corresponding age group in the general population

BLUE = Percentages of learners enrolled are higher than the numbers of people in the corresponding population group

Learner enrolment patterns across school grades over time

Table 2 shows shifts in learner enrolment numbers across school grades over time, using available data. There was increased Grade R enrolment, and decreased enrolment between the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, between the Senior Phase and Grade 10, and between each of Grades 10, 11 and 12.

¹ The figures in the *Education Statistics* publications (DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013a) differ from those in the *School Realities* publications (DBE 2012d, 2013b), but are of a similar order of magnitude.

Table 2: Numbers of learners enrolled in ordinary schools in 2006; 2009-2014, showing percentage change in numbers across phases/grades (sources of data on which calculations are based: DoE 2008 & 2010, DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

Year	Grade R ¹	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-6 (%)	Grades 7-9 (%)	Grade 10 (%)	Grade 11 (%)	Grade 12 (%)
2006	441 587(44)	3 807 756	3 018 298 (-20)	2 863 731 (-5)	1 093 297 (-62)	890 564 (-19)	568 664 (-36)
2009	620 223 (60)	3 111 651	3 037 483 (-2)	2 884 545 (-5)	1 016 360 (-65)	880 515 (-13)	599 626 (-32)
2010	707 203 (66)	3 083 977	2 959 644 (-4)	2 991 254 (+1)	1 039 762 (-65)	841 815 (-20)	579 384 (-31)
2011	734 654 (69)	3 137 651	2 878 490 (-8)	2 999 305 (+4)	1 094 189 (-64)	847 738 (-23)	534 498 (-37)
2012	767 865 (**)	3 251 134	2 840 820 (-13)	2 980 150 (+5)	1 103 495 (-63)	874 331 (-21)	551 837 (-37)
2013	779 370 (**)	3 364 463	2 797 287 (-17)	2 917 504 (+4)	1 146 285 (-61)	834 611 (-27)	597 196 (-28)
2014	813 044 (**)	3 459 242	2 860 630 (-17)	2 859 758 (-1)	1 139 872 (-60)	897 342 (-21)	571 819 (-36)

1 Percentages in this column refer to percentages of learners enrolled for Grade R compared with the corresponding age group in the population

(**) Information not yet available

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Gender Parity Index (GPI) in ordinary schools, 2006, and 2009-2011

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) refers to the numbers of learners enrolled for the specific school grades noted, as a percentage of the total appropriate school-age population (DBE 2013a: 7). A GER of over 100% indicates that there are more learners in the formal school system than in the corresponding school-age cohort in the general population (*ibid.*), possibly due to under-age enrolment; attrition (repetition of grades); or over-age participation.

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is defined as GER for female learners divided by the GER for male learners; it describes levels of access to education by gender (DBE 2013a: 8). A GPI of more than '1' indicates that in relation to the corresponding school-age cohort in the general population, there are more females than males in the school system (*ibid.*).

Table 3 uses available data to show a shift away from the desired GER for female and male learners, between 2006 and 2011.

Table 3: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Gender Parity Index (GPI) in ordinary schools for 2006; 2009-2011 (sources of data on which calculations are based: DoE 2008, 2010; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b)

School sector	Gender	Year	School phases (Grades 1-12)				School Bands (Grades R-12)			
			GER %		GPI%		GER %		GPI %	
			Primary Phase (Gr. 1-7)	Secondary Phase (Gr. 8-12)	Primary Phase (Gr. 1-7)	Secondary Phase (Gr. 8-12)	GET Band (Gr. R-9)	FET Band (Gr. 10-12)	GET Band (Gr. R-9)	FET Band (Gr. 10-12)
Public and independent schools	Female	2006	100	95	N/A	N/A	95	92	N/A	N/A
		2009	96	88			92	85		
		2010	92	89			90	84		
		2011	91	90			90	84		
	Male	2006	104	87	N/A	N/A	97	80	N/A	N/A
		2009	99	82			94	75		
		2010	96	83			93	75		
		2011	95	84			93	75		
	Total	2006	102	91	0.96	1.09	96	86	0.98	1.15
		2009	98	85	0.97	1.07	93	80	0.98	1.13
		2010	94	86	0.96	1.07	92	80	0.98	1.12
		2011	93	87	0.96	1.07	92	80	0.97	1.13

Numbers and percentages of learners enrolled in public versus independent schools

Table 4 shows the numbers and percentages of learners enrolled in ordinary schools by school sector and phase/grade, in 2006 and the 2009-2014 period for which data were readily available (DoE 2008; DBE 2010a, 2012d, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a).

The numbers of learners in independent schools remained a fraction of those in public schools, but slightly increased *percentages* of learners attended independent schools in the Intermediate and Senior Phases, and in Grades 11 and 12, in the period shown. There were gendered patterns (SAQA 2015d): while the proportions of male and female learners differed in public schools, those of male and female learners were similar in independent primary schools, and the gaps were smaller in proportions of male and female learners in secondary school.

Table 4: Percentages of learners enrolled in ordinary schools by school sector and phase/grade, 2006 and 2009-2014 (sources of data on which calculations are based: DoE 2008 & 2010, DBE 2012d, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

School sector	Year	Foundation Phase Grades 1-3 (%)	Intermediate Phase Grades 4-6 (%)	Senior Phase Grades 7-9 (%)	FET Phase, only Grade 10 (%)	FET Phase, only Grade 11 (%)	FET Phase, only Grade 12 (%)
Public	2006	3 282 414 (86)	2 945 597 (98)	2 784 097 (97)	1 063 915 (97)	862 900 (97)	538 972 (95)
	2009	3 018 588 (97)	2 955 458 (97)	2 798 122 (97)	987 680 (97)	851 006 (97)	568 995 (95)
	2010	2 975 173 (97)	2 866 389 (97)	2 890 300 (97)	1 006 381 (97)	808 897 (96)	543 414 (94)
	2011	3 020 867 (96)	2 781 641 (97)	2 894 881 (97)	1 055 790 (96)	812 627 (96)	496 593 (93)
	2012	3 123 335 (96)	2 739 719 (96)	2 874 442 (96)	1 064 898 (97)	835 667 (96)	512 133 (93)
	2013	3 228 207 (96)	2 693 725 (96)	2 813 217 (96)	1 106 913 (97)	797 304 (96)	556 445 (93)
	2014	3 310 979 (96)	2 749 144 (96)	2 752 576 (96)	1 100 877 (96)	858 769 (96)	532 553 (93)
	Public + Independent	2006	3 807 756	3 018 298	2 863 731	1 093 297	890 564
2009		3 111 651	3 037 483	2 884 545	1 016 360	880 515	599 626
2010		3 083 977	2 959 644	2 991 254	1 039 762	841 815	579 384
2011		3 137 651	2 878 490	2 999 305	1 094 189	847 738	534 498
2012		3 251 134	2 840 820	2 980 150	1 103 495	874 331	551 837
2013		3 364 463	2 797 287	2 917 504	1 146 285	834 611	597 196
2014		3 459 242	2 860 630	2 859 758	1 139 872	897 342	571 819

2.3.2.2 Learner success rates in the Annual National Assessments (ANA)

Given the newness of national assessments at school levels below Grade 12, limited data were available for these analyses. In 2012, the Minister of Basic Education (MBE) instituted Annual National Assessments (ANA) for learners in Grades 1-6 and 9 in public and state-subsidised independent schools (DBE 2014d). The idea was to assess levels of learner competence in literacy and numeracy annually, and to use the ANA results to identify and address gaps in learning. There was some resistance to the implementation of the ANA, and there have been critiques against using the ANA for comparison purposes, given that schools administer the tests and standards are therefore likely to vary (Spaull 2015). Starting from the second year of full implementation, 2013, a 'Verification Stream' of tests was run in selected schools alongside the 'General Stream' of tests which all schools received, as a means to test the reliability the results. The two sets of tests were identical, but the Verification Stream tests were administered and marked by an independent team. ANA tests were developed for Mathematics, Home Language and First Additional Language in all 11 official languages for the Foundation Phase tests, and for Mathematics, English and Afrikaans for the Senior Phase tests.

Overarching ANA results 2012-2014, including gender and social class patterns

Table 5 and 6 show the percentages of learners obtaining scores of 50% or more, in the General and Verification Streams, in the ANA tests for 2012-2014. Table 7 shows that female learners scored higher average percentages than male learners, across all three learning areas, years and school grades. Table 8 shows that learners' average percentages increased with the increase in social class levels. There was generally an increase in learners' percentages – excluding those of the Grade 9s – across the years 2012-2014.

Table 5: Percentages of learners obtaining at least 50% in the ANA General Stream for Mathematics, Home Language and First Additional Language by year (source: DBE 2014d)

Percentages of learners achieving at least 50% in the ANA Stream 1 tests									
Grade	Mathematics			Home Language			First Additional Language		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
1	68	60	68	58	61	63	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	57	59	62	55	57	31	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	41	53	56	52	51	56	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	37	37	37	43	49	57	34	39	41
5	30	33	37	40	46	57	30	37	47
6	27	39	43	43	59	63	36	46	45
9	13	14	11	43	43	48	35	33	34

Table 6: Percentages of learners obtaining at least 50% in the ANA Verification Stream for Mathematics, Home Language and First Additional Language by year (source: DBE 2014d)

Percentages of learners achieving at least 50% in the ANA Stream 2 tests									
Grade	Mathematics			Home Language			First Additional Language		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
3	36	59	65	57	57	66	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	11	27	35	39	68	77	24	41	42
9	2	2	3	39	37	48	21	17	18

Table 7: Average percentage marks in the ANA for Mathematics, Home Language and First Additional Language by school grade, year and gender (sources from which the data were obtained: DBE 2012e, 2013d, 2014d)

Year	School Grade	Mathematics %		Home Language %		First Additional Language %	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
2012	3	42.9	39.6	56.1	48.2	N/A	N/A
	6	27.5	25.8	46.0	39.6	38.8	32.6
	9	13.4	11.9	46.9	39.9	38.1	31.4
2013	3	52.6	48.8	54.7	47.0	N/A	N/A
	6	40.4	37.6	62.5	55.0	49.5	42.1
	9	14.8	13.1	46.4	39.6	36.4	30.4
2014	3	57.5	53.7	60.5	52.2	N/A	N/A
	6	45.0	41.3	66.3	59.0	50.0	41.1
	9	11.7	10.0	51.3	45.3	37.8	31.2

Table 8: Average percentage marks in the ANA for First Additional Language by school grade and poverty quintile 2012, 2013 and 2014 (sources from which the data were obtained: DBE 2012e, 2013d, 2014d)

Year	School Grade	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2012	4	31.5	31.9	34.5	38.0	44.7
	5	27.4	27.8	29.8	33.9	46.8
	6	33.0	33.9	36.3	39.8	50.2
	9	31.3	32.5	35.6	38.8	46.5
2013	4	36.7	38.9	40.2	44.5	54.8
	5	33.5	34.9	36.5	43.4	59.5
	6	43.3	45.0	46.9	51.3	59.2
	9	30.4	31.7	33.9	37.2	47.5
2014	4	38.7	40.2	42.7	46.5	49.8
	5	44.0	46.2	48.0	52.2	56.9
	6	43.0	44.7	46.6	50.6	60.0
	9	32.4	33.6	34.7	37.0	42.9

Comment on the 2012-2014 ANA results

Achievements in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) started from a very low base in 2012 and improved slightly, although the credibility of this assumption has been questioned in the absence of a national administration system for the tests (Spaull 2015). Development of the Verification Stream showed potential to enhance the credibility of the results. In this part of the system there is physical access but weak access to knowledge and skills despite seven to 20 national quality-related interventions annually between 2012 and 2014 (DBE 2012a, 2013a, 2014a).

2.3.2.3 Learner success rates in the National Senior Certificate (NSC)

National Senior Certificate (NSC): access and success 2008-2013

Table 9 shows the total numbers and percentages of full-time and part-time learners enrolled to write NSC examinations across the years 2008-2013², using readily available data. The percentages of full-time learners decreased, with a corresponding increase in part-time learners.

Table 9: Total numbers of full-time and part-time learners enrolled to write National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations 2008-2013 (sources from which the data were obtained: DoE 2010, DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

Year	No. of learners (%) Full-time	No. of learners (%) Part-time	Total
2008	588 643 (99.8)	1 116 (0.2)	589 759
2009	580 937 (93.7)	39 255 (6.3)	620 192
2010	559 166 (87.1)	82 835 (12.9)	642 001
2011	511 038 (81.9)	112 780 (18.1)	623 818
2012	527 814 (81.6)	120 484 (18.4)	647 074
2013	576 490 (81.5)	130 646 (18.5)	707 136

Table 10 shows the numbers of learners enrolled for, writing and passing the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, 2008-2013 – as reported by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). An additional column has been added to the right-hand side of the table, showing the 'actual success rate' – the percentages of *enrolled learners* who passed, reflecting the effect of the drop-out rate between enrolment and writing.

Table 10: Total numbers of learners enrolled for, writing and passing the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations 2008-2013 (sources from which the data were calculated: DoE 2010, DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

Year	No. of learners enrolled in Grade 1	No. of learners enrolled for NSC	No. of learners writing NSC exams (%)	No. of learners passing NSC exams (%)	Actual success rate (%)
2008	-----	589 759	533 561 (90.5)	344 790 (64.6)	344 790 (58.5)
2009	1 105 186	620 192	552 073 (89.0)	337 180 (61.1)	337 180 (54.4)
2010	1 116 899	642 001	537 543 (83.7)	364 513(67.8)	364 513 (56.8)
2011	1 177 089	623 818	496 090 (79.5)	348 117(70.2)	348 117 (55.8)
2012	1 208 973	647 074	511 152 (79.0)	377 829(73.9)	377 829 (58.4)
2013	1 222 851	707 136	562 112 (79.5)	439 779(78.2)	439 779 (62.2)

Legend

----- Information not available in the documents analysed

Table 11 shows the varying numbers of learners writing and passing selected subjects in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations in the years 2008-2013. Table 12 shows steadily decreasing percentages of learners enrolling for Mathematics across the period, and steadily increasing enrolment for Mathematical Literacy.

Table 11: Numbers of learners writing and passing selected subjects in National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, 2008-2013 (sources from which the data were calculated: DoE 2010, DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

Subjects	Year	No. writing	No. achieving 30% or
----------	------	-------------	----------------------

² The numbers of learners recorded across DoE and DBE publications for particular years are not necessarily the same (examples include but are not limited to DoE 2008, DBE 2010a, 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b, 2013d, 2014a, 2014d).

			higher (%) ³
Mathematics	2008	298 821	136 503 (45.7)
	2009	290 407	133 505 (46.0)
	2010	263 034	124 749 (47.4)
	2011	224 635	104 033 (46.3)
	2012	225 874	121 970 (54.0)
	2013	241 509	142 666 (59.1)
Mathematical Literacy	2008	263 464	207 230 (78.7)
	2009	277 677	207 326 (74.7)
	2010	280 836	241 576 (86.0)
	2011	275 380	236 548 (85.9)
	2012	291 341	254 611 (87.4)
	2013	324 097	282 270 (87.1)
Physical Science	2008	218 156	119 823 (54.9)
	2009	220 882	81 356 (36.8)
	2010	205 364	98 260 (47.8)
	2011	180 585	96 441 (53.4)
	2012	179 194	109 918 (61.3)
	2013	184 383	124 206 (67.4)
English First Additional Language (FAL)	2008	464 174	438 832 (94.5)
	2009	469 486	435 104 (92.7)
	2010	449 080	424 392 (94.5)
	2011	414 480	398 740 (96.2)
	2012	419 263	410 255 (97.9)
	2013	454 666	449 420 (98.8)

Table 12: Numbers and percentages of learners writing Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, 2008-2013 (sources from which the data were calculated: DoE 2010, DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

Subjects	Year	No. writing	Total combined no. of learners writing Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy (%)
Mathematics	2008	298 821	562 285 (53)
	2009	290 407	568 084 (51)
	2010	263 034	543 870 (48)

³ The achievement of 30% indicates a pass mark for the subject. To pass the whole National Senior Certificate (NSC), learners need (1) to pass at least three subjects with marks of 40% or more, with one of these subjects being a Home Language, as well as (2) achieve at least 30% for a further three subjects. Learners can fail their First Additional Language and still pass if they achieve condition (1) and their average mark is over 33.33%. Higher pass requirements are needed to progress into higher certificate, diploma, and degree studies.

	2011	224 635	500 015 (45)
	2012	225 874	517 215 (44)
	2013	241 509	565 606 (43)
Mathematical Literacy	2008	263 464	562 285 (47)
	2009	277 677	568 084 (49)
	2010	280 836	543 870 (52)
	2011	275 380	500 015 (55)
	2012	291 341	517 215 (56)
	2013	324 097	565 606 (57)

Comment on the NSC trends

First-level analyses of the NSC data 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, are not in the directions desired:

- numbers of full-time learners registering to write the NSC exams **decreased steadily** across 2008-2013 while 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%. 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. The **'actual' pass rates for the 2008-2013 years are 58-62%. One eighth** of the numbers enrolling for Grade 1, passed the NSC exams;
- **proportions of learners writing the NSC Mathematics exams decreased** steadily across the years 2008-2013 while proportions of learners writing Mathematical Literacy increased;
- there were **general increases in the pass rates for Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, Physical Science and English First Additional Language** across the 2008-2013 years.

The National Department of Education and DBE reported between two and 13 quality-related national interventions at the level of Grades 10-12, annually, between 2009 and 2012 (DoE 2009, DBE 2010c, 2011c, 2012e, 2013).

2.3.2.4 Learner access and progression in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College sector, 2008-2012

The post-school Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector (formerly *FET*) has seen the most radical reform of all the sectors in the South African NQF. Developments in this sector were considered via five snapshots available.

The first snapshot is provided by an informal analysis conducted in 2009, of unpublished 2008 NCV-related data held by the National Board for Further Education and Training (NBFET)⁴. In 2009 the DHET published a report – *FET Colleges: National Certificate (Vocational) and Report 190/191: Report on the*

⁴ The NBFET was set up as part of the moves to integrate the FET College sector. Its responsibilities included advising the Minister of Labour. Shortly after the Ministry of Higher Education and Training was established, the NBFET was disbanded.

Conduct of National Examinations 2009 (DHET 2009). Highlights from this report comprise a second snapshot. The third and fourth snapshots are provided by the publications *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa 2011*, and *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa 2012* (DHET 2013d, 2014b). A fifth snapshot is provided by SAQA-University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) 2008-11 research into *FET College Lecturers: Biography; Pedagogy; Identity*.

Data in the five snapshots are not comparable, but considered together provide a picture of developments between 2008 and 2014. TVET Colleges provided three broad categories of qualifications in this period (DHET 2014b: 19):

- the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV2, NCV3, NCV4), on NQF Levels 2, 3 and 4 respectively;
- the National Technical Certificate (NTC), also known as the National Education (NATED) or Report 191 Certificate, which can lead to the (N) Diploma after 18-24 months of work experience in the case of Business or General Studies, or after 2000 hours of work experience in the case of Engineering Studies; and
- Occupational qualifications and part-qualifications based on programmes closely linked to workplaces.

The following trends emerged from the five snapshots.

National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) – overall learner access and success patterns, 2008-2011

- The uptake of the then-new National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) in 2008-2009 was slow, and low numbers of learners passed the exams.
- The number of learners registered to write NCV2 exams in 2009 (the year for which these data were available) – 588 224 – was of the same order of magnitude as the number writing the NSC exams that year, with the numbers of all learners registered to write the N1-6 programme exams being 474 007.
- In 2008, 2009 and 2011, there were steep drops in the numbers of learners writing the exams as the NCV levels increased. However, the proportions of learners passing, of those registering to write the NCV exams, increased with NCV level.
- Learner pass rates at different TVET Colleges differed widely in the year for which data were available for analysis (2008). Pass rates in particular colleges were very high, pointing to the need to study and disseminate known good practices.
- Table 13 shows the numbers and percentages of learners registered for, writing and passing NCV exams in 2011 and 2012, using available data: learner numbers declined with NCV level; success rates increased with NCV level. Actual success rates were low.

Table 13: Numbers and percentages of students registered for, writing and passing NCV Levels 2, 3 and 4 exams in public and private FET Colleges in 2011 (source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2013d) and 2012 (source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2014b)

Qualifications	No. registered to write	No. writing (and % of those registered)	No. passing (and % of those writing)	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered)
NCV Level 2 (2012)	73 044	38 792 (53.1%)	16 517 (42.6%)	16 517 (22.6%)
NCV Level 3 (2012)	28 017	18 305 (65.3%)	7 663 (41.9%)	7 663 (27.4%)
NCV Level 4 (2012)	18 607	15 334 (82.4%)	6 018 (39.3%)	6 018 (32.3%)
NCV Level 4 (2011)	19 889	17 836 (89.7%)	7 638 (42.8%)	7 638 (38.4%)

Comparing overall learner access and success in NCV and N programmes, 2008-2012

- In 2008 and 2009 (the years for which these data were available), the numbers of learners writing N3 exams were higher than the numbers of learners writing NCV4 exams (both being NQF Level 4 programmes).
- The occupational qualifications with the greatest proportion of learners in 2011 and 2012 were the N programmes.
- In 2009 (the only year for which these data were available), the numbers of learners registered to write, writing and passing N2-6 exams dropped with the increase in N programme level, and the drop was steeper for Science Programmes than for General Programmes.
- In 2009, 2011 and 2012 (the years for which data were available), pass rates for the N programme exams were generally lower than those for the NCV exams.
- While NCV pass rates increased steadily with increasing NQF levels in 2009, 2011 and 2012, and a similar pattern was visible in 2009 for N exams, pass rates for N exams fluctuated across the years for which data were available.
- The numbers of learners writing and passing the N3 and the N6 exams increased considerably between 2011 and 2012, while the pass rates for these exams declined.

Table 14 shows the numbers and percentages of learners registered for, writing and passing N programme exams in 2012, using available data.

Table 14: Numbers and percentages of students writing and passing N Levels 1-6 exams in public and private FET Colleges in 2012 (source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2014b)

Qualifications	No. registered to write	No. writing (and % of those registered)	No. passing (and % of those writing)	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered)
Report 191 N1 (2012) Engineering Studies	8 293	5 430 (53.1%)	2 081 (38.3%)	2 081 (25.1%)
Report 191 N2 (2012) Engineering Studies	13 594	10 154 (74.7%)	3 013 (29.7%)	3 013 (22.2%)
Report 191 N3 (2012) Engineering Studies	14 216	9 928 (69.8%)	3 724 (37.5%)	3 724 (26.2%)
Report 191 N4 (2012) Engineering Studies	9 189	6 524 (80%)	2 705 (41.5%)	2 705 (29.4%)
Report 191 N5 (2012) Engineering Studies	6 692	4 874 (72.8%)	1 840 (37.8%)	1 840 (27.5%)

Report 191 N6 (2012) Engineering Studies	3 720	2 744 (73.8%)	992 (36.2%)	992 (26.7%)
Report 191 N4 (2012) Business Studies	27 446	19 155 (69.8%)	4 974 (26%)	4 974 (18.1%)
Report 191 N5 (2012) Business Studies	20 703	16 671 (80.5%)	2 725 (16.3%)	2 725 (13.2%)
Report 191 N6 (2012) Business Studies	7 384	5 991 (81.1%)	1 910 (31.9%)	1 910 (25.9%)

Table 14 shows that for N Level 1-6 Engineering Studies, roughly half to three-quarters of students registered to write actually wrote, with around a third to two-fifths passing in 2012 – a proportion similar to that for the NCV exams at Levels 2-4 in that year. Business Studies student numbers dropped with increasing N levels, in a way similar to that in the NCV exams. The drop in learner numbers for N Engineering Studies was less steep.

Comparing learner enrolments in public and private FET Colleges, 2011-2012

Table 15 shows the numbers and percentages of all students enrolled for NCV and N programmes in 2011 and 2012, in public and private FET Colleges respectively, and in total.

Table 15: Percentages of students enrolled for NCV and N programmes 2011-2012, in public and private colleges (sources of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2013d, 2014b)

Qualification/ Students	No. in Pub. + Priv. TVET Colleges 2012 (% of total)	No. in Pub. + Priv. TVET Colleges 2011 (% of total)	No. in PUBLIC TVET Colleges 2012 (% of total)	No. in PUBLIC TVET Colleges 2011 (% of total)	No. in PRIVATE TVET College 2012 (% of total)	No. in PRIVATE TVET College 2011 (% of total)
NCV	144 756 (18.9%)	126 474 (23.9%)	140 575 (21.4%)	124 658 (31.2%)	4 181 (3.8%)	1 816 (1.4%)
Report 191 N1-6	375 751 (48.9%)	242 278 (45.9%)	359 624 (54.8%)	222 754 (55.8%)	16 127 (14.5%)	19 524 (15.1%)
Occupational qualifications	109 515 (14.3%)	84 193 (15.9%)	62 359 (9.5%)	20 799 (5.2%)	47 156 (42.3%)	63 394 (49%)
Other	137 317 (17.9%)	75 466 (14.3%)	93 417 (14.2%)	30 934 (7.8%)	43 900 (39.4%)	44 532 (34.5%)
TOTAL PUBLIC + PRIVATE	767 339	528 411	655 975	399 145	111 364	129 266

Table 15 shows that:

- overall, student numbers at TVET Colleges increased by just under a third between 2011 and 2012 – the increases were mainly in the public colleges;
- the qualifications with the greatest proportions of students in public colleges were the N programmes; and that
- overall, a smaller proportion of students enrolled for NCV and occupational qualifications in 2012 relative to 2011, with more students overall enrolling for N and ‘other’ qualifications in this period. Possibly worth noting are the increased proportions of students enrolled for occupational qualifications and other learning offerings in public colleges, and for NCV programmes and other learning offerings in private colleges.

2.3.2.5 Redress and student access, success and progression in Higher Education (HE)

Data in this section were drawn from the *Vital Stats* publications produced annually by the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2012, 2013, 2014).

Highlights from student enrolment data for public Higher Education Institutions (HEI), 2005-2012

- In the period 2005-2012 there were increases in student enrolments for undergraduate and postgraduate studies in HEI, of 25% and 35% respectively, with the percentages of students enrolling for all types of HEI increasing.
- The proportions of female students in HEI were higher than the proportions of women in the general population, and the relative proportions of women increased between 2005 and 2012.
- Population group differences between the proportions of students in HEI relative to proportions of particular population groups in society decreased across the years 2005 to 2012.
- The highest proportions of enrolments and graduations were in the 20-24 years age group, followed by enrolments in the 25-30 years age group.

Summary of student achievement trends in public and private HEI, 2005-2012

- The overall percentages of graduations were lower than desired in 2005-2012, but there were steady increases in the percentages of students graduating at under and postgraduate levels.
- In 2005-2012 the differences in graduation rates between students from different population groups narrowed. This trend is in the desired direction; the increasing drop-out rates are not.
- The graduation rates of male and female students increased across 2005-2012; female students continued to achieve greater success rates in this period.
- The percentages of learners graduating differed across disciplines.
- Cohort studies for students enrolling in 2006 and 2007, and completing their under and postgraduate qualifications in regulation time, or regulation plus one, two or three years, showed similar patterns. The percentages of graduations increased with the NQF levels of the qualifications, up to Honours degree level. Population group differences decreased as the number of years taken for completion increased.

- Regarding graduations by mode of delivery (contact versus distance) in 2005-2012, the numbers graduating via *contact* modes increased for all except White students. The percentages of students graduating via *contact* modes dropped for all population groups, apart from African students. The percentages of students from all population groups graduating via *distance* modes increased for students from all population groups, apart from African students.
- Comparing the 1994, 2003 and 2012 snapshots of the total numbers of student achievements via public HEI recorded in the NLRD, a shift showed from 50% to 61% of records for female students, and the percentages of records for African, Coloured and Indian students combined, shifted from 43% to 76%. For private HEI, the records for female students shifted from 51% to 49% between 1999 and 2013, and the records for African, Coloured and Indian students combined, shifted from 72% to 59%.

Student enrolment in public Higher Education Institutions, 2007-2012, by population group and gender

Figures 9 and 10 show that student numbers are increasing in the desired directions. Redress, suggested by comparing percentages of students in particular population and gender groups to the corresponding proportions of these groupings in the general population, is shown in Figure 11 and 12.

Figure 9: Headcount of student enrolment in public Higher Education Institutions by population group, 2007-2012 (source: CHE 2014: 3)

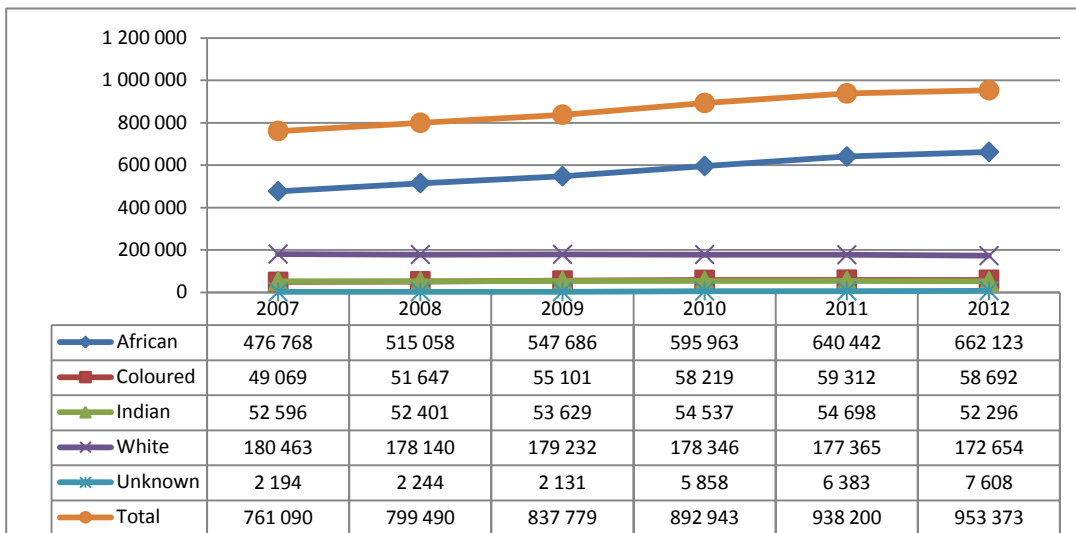


Figure 10: Headcount of student enrolment in public Higher Education Institutions by gender, 2007-2012 (source: CHE 2014: 3)

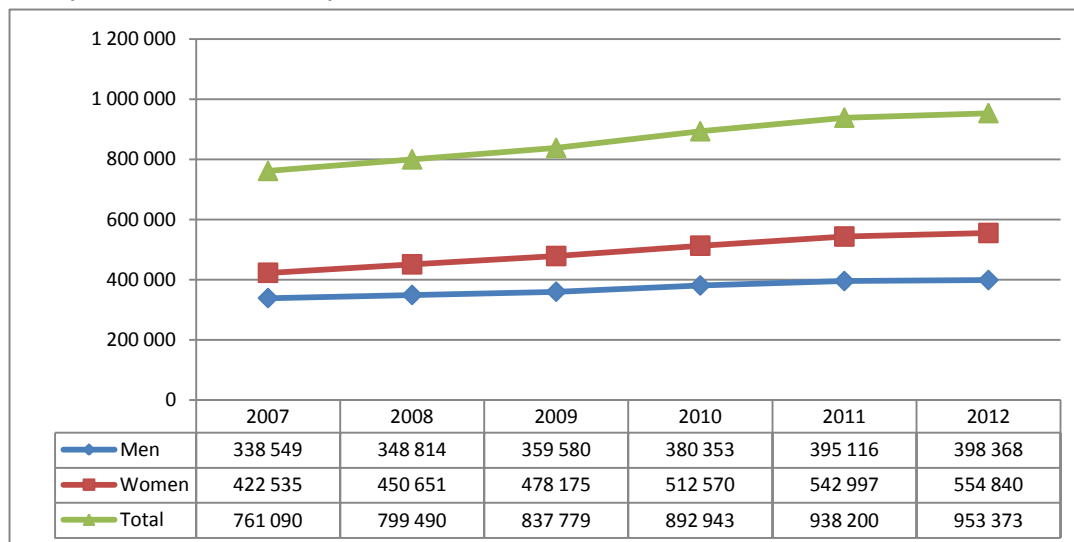


Figure 11: Headcount of student enrolment in public Higher Education Institutions as a proportional comparison to population headcount by population group, 2007-2012 (source: CHE 2014d: 4)

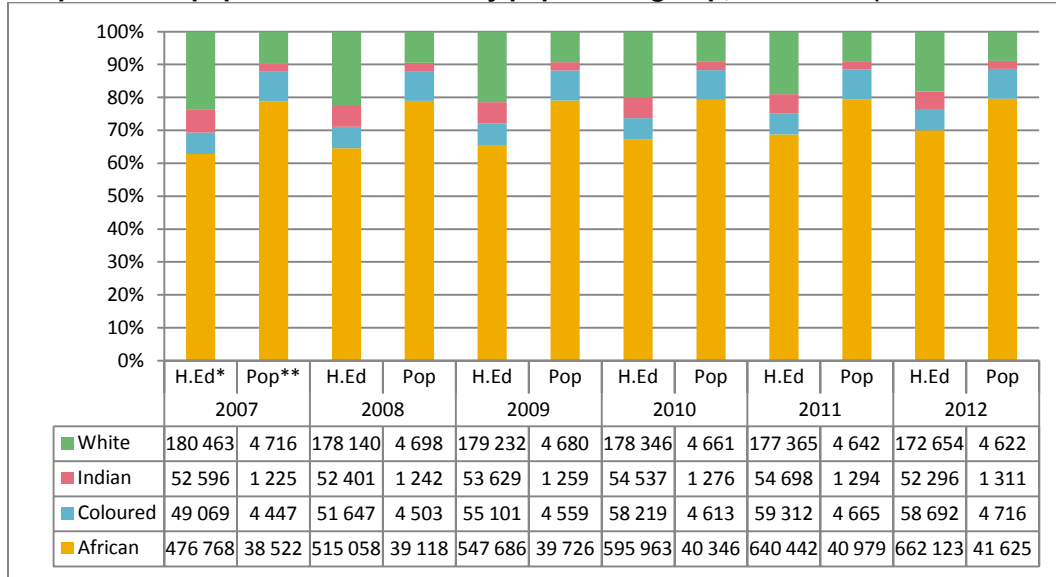
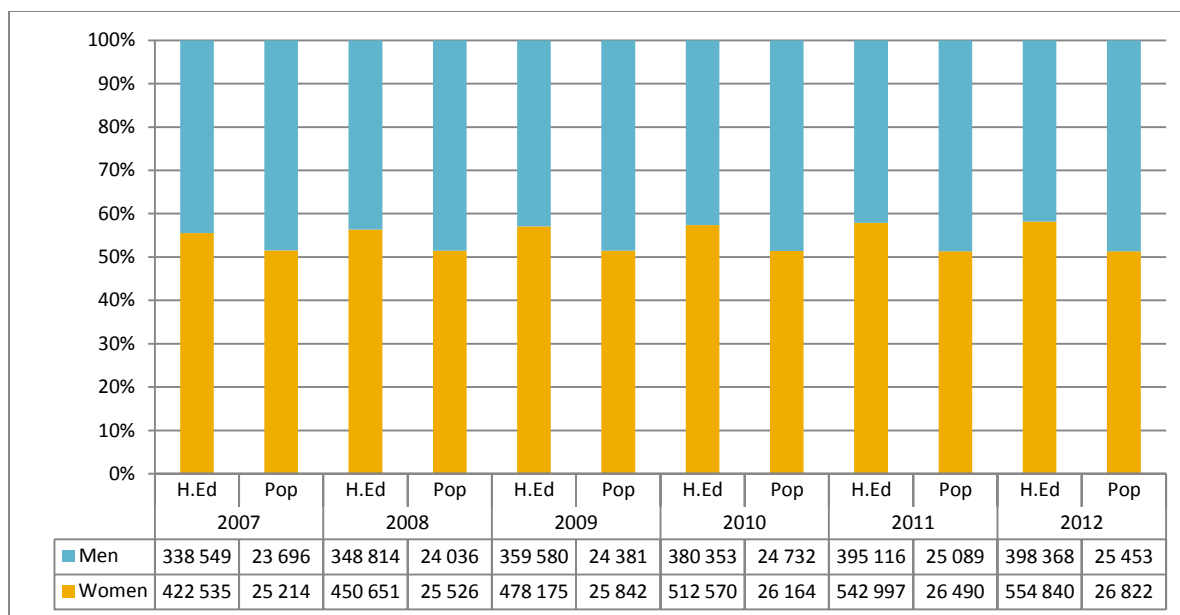


Figure 12: Headcount of student enrolment in public Higher Education Institutions as a proportional comparison to population headcount by gender, 2007-2012 (sources from which data were compiled: CHE 2012: 2, 2013: 2 and 2014: 4)



Comment on student enrolment rates in public HEI in relation to population groups

In 2005, 2007 and 2012 African students in public HEI made up 61%, 63% and 70% respectively (CHE 2012, 2013, 2014), while African people made up 79% of the national population in 2005 (CHE 2012: 2), and 79.6% in 2012. The proportions of Coloured students in public HEI in 2005 and 2012 were roughly similar, at 6% and 6.5% respectively (CHE 2012, 2014). Coloured people made up 9% of the national population in these years. In 2005 headcounts of Indian and White students in public HEI made up 7% and 25% respectively, while their national counterparts made up 3% and 10% respectively (*ibid.*). Headcounts for these groups dropped between 2005 and 2012 to 5.5% and 18.3% for Indian and White students respectively, and to 2.5% and 8.8% for these groups nationally (CHE 2013, 2014)

Comment on student enrolment rates in public HEI in relation to gender, 2005-2012

In 2005 the student population in the public Higher Education sector was 55% female and 45% male; the general population was 52% female and 48% male (CHE 2012). This gap widened between 2007 and 2012, with the percentage of female students rising from 56% to 58%, and the national female population falling from 52% to 51%.

2.3.2.6 Redress, access, success and progression in the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) context

Overall enrolments and achievements for occupational qualifications annually: 2002-2012

Figures 13 and 14 show NLRD records for first-time enrolments and achievements for occupational qualifications annually for 2002-2012. These data were supplied by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). There was a general upward trend in records of enrolments and achievements, with spikes in particular years.

Figure 13: Total first-time enrolments for occupational qualifications, 2002-2012 (source: NLRD)

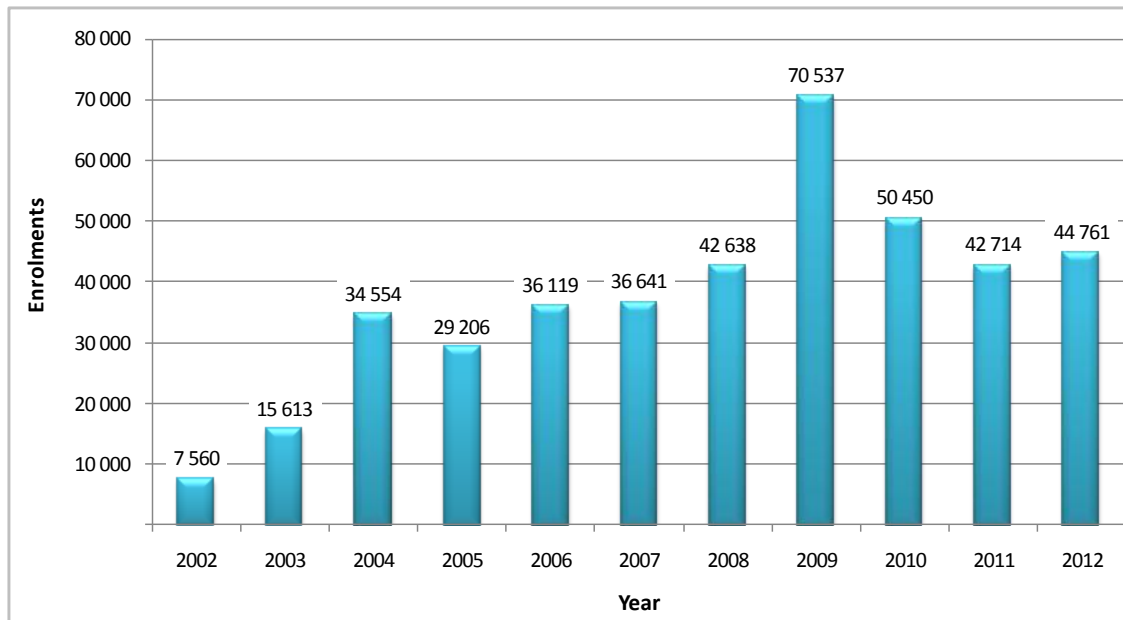
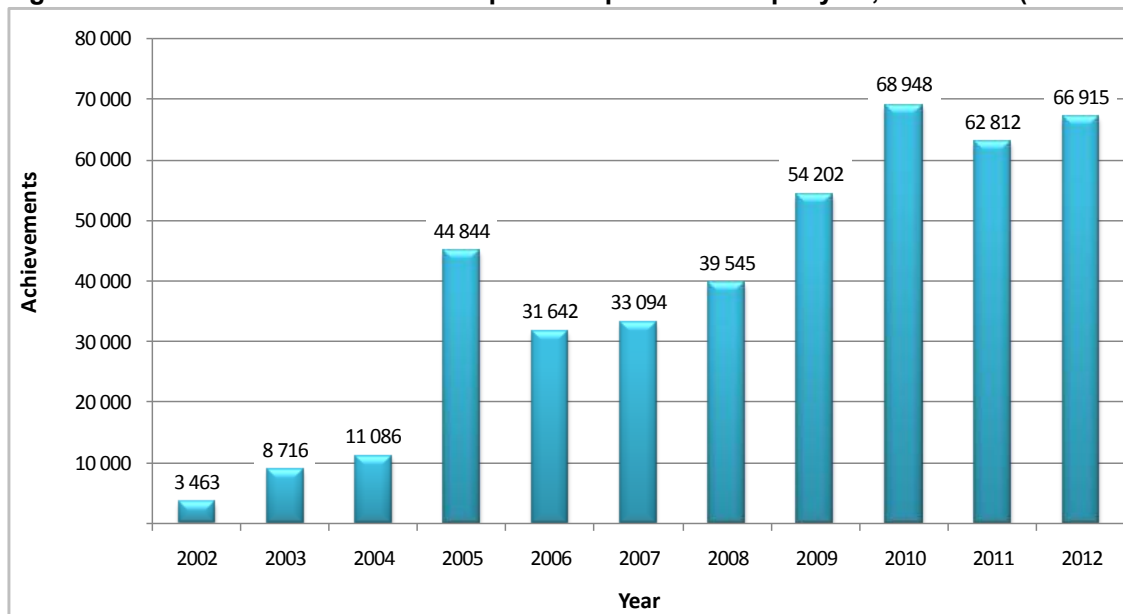


Figure 14: Total achievements for occupational qualifications per year, 2002-2012 (source: NLRD)



To explain the fluctuations in the enrolment and the achievement datasets, the data would need to be represented according to occupational sub-field, with stakeholder inputs needed. For example, the 2006 spike (Figure 14) was linked to the high number of achievements in Agriculture and Nature Conservation, related to growth in the sector at the time. Another example was the increase in achievements in the Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology sector in 2005 due to a once-off special grant released for employed learners. Increases in achievements from 2007 to 2009 coincided with an injection of funds in the Education, Training and Development (ETDP) sub-field as part of a special project. The 2009-2010 peaks (Figures 13, 14) coincided with an increase in achievements in the Physical Planning and Construction sub-field possibly but not necessarily linked to the skills needed for South Africa to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Achievements of occupational qualifications by gender

Figure 15 shows learner achievements of occupational qualifications by gender for 2002-2012. Figure 16 shows snapshots of these data in 2002, 2007 and 2012, showing gender shifts over time. Sub-field trends would not necessarily mirror overarching trends.

Figure 15: Achievement trends for occupational qualifications by gender, 2002-2012 (source: NLRD)

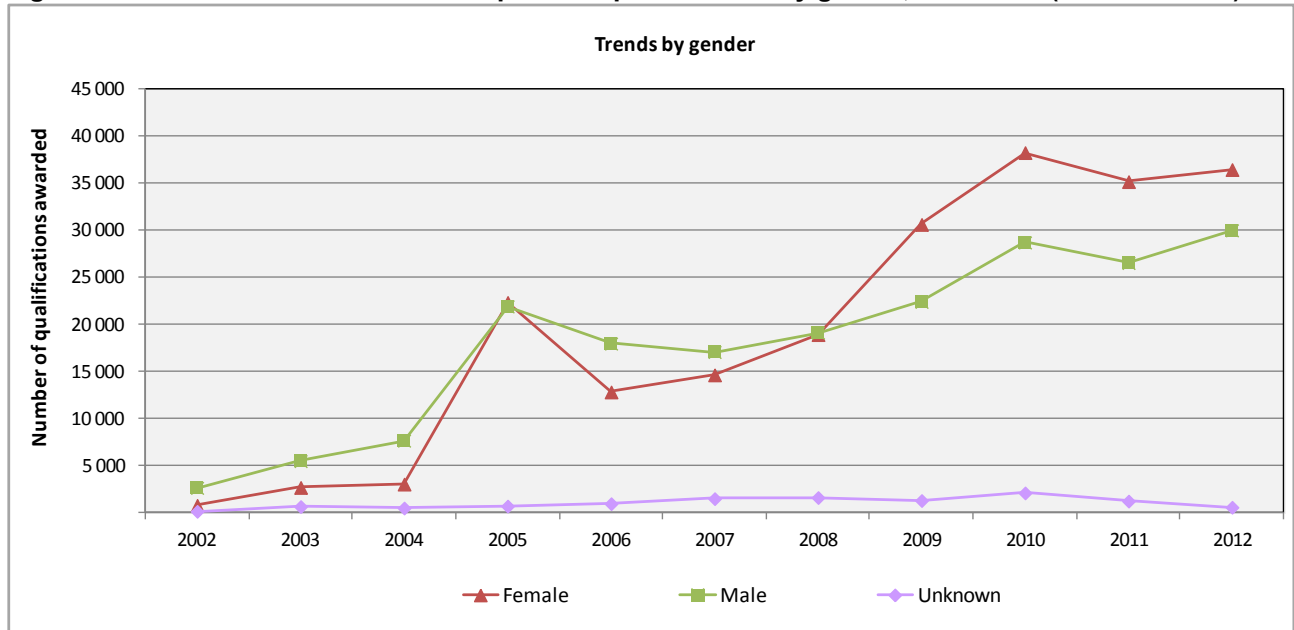
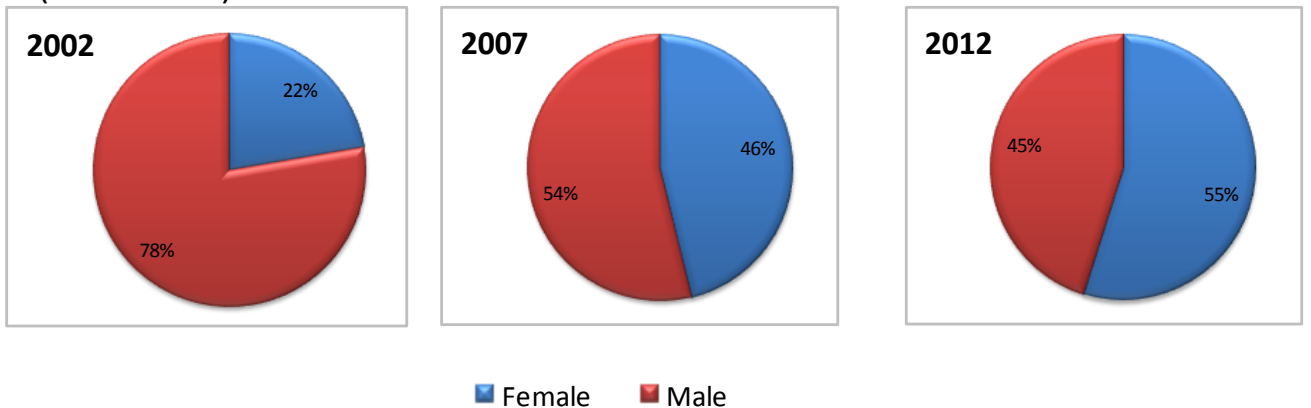


Figure 16: Snapshots of achievements of occupational qualifications by gender, 2002, 2007 and 2012 (source: NLRD)



Achievements of occupational qualifications by population group

Figure 17 shows the numbers of achievements of occupational qualifications by population group annually between 2002 and 2012. There was a general increase in the numbers of achievement records for learners from all population groups in this period. For African learners there was an increase in records of occupational qualification achievements of over 5 000% between 2002 and 2012; for Coloured learners, an increase of over 1 600%; for Indian learners a 370% increase; and for White learners a 350% increase. The proportions of records in 2012 were much closer to the proportions of the population groups in the national population, than they were in 2002. Figure 18 provides snapshots of

records by population group in 2002, 2007 and 2012 to highlight these proportions.

Figure 17: Achievement trends for occupational qualifications by population group, 2002-2012 (source: NLRD)

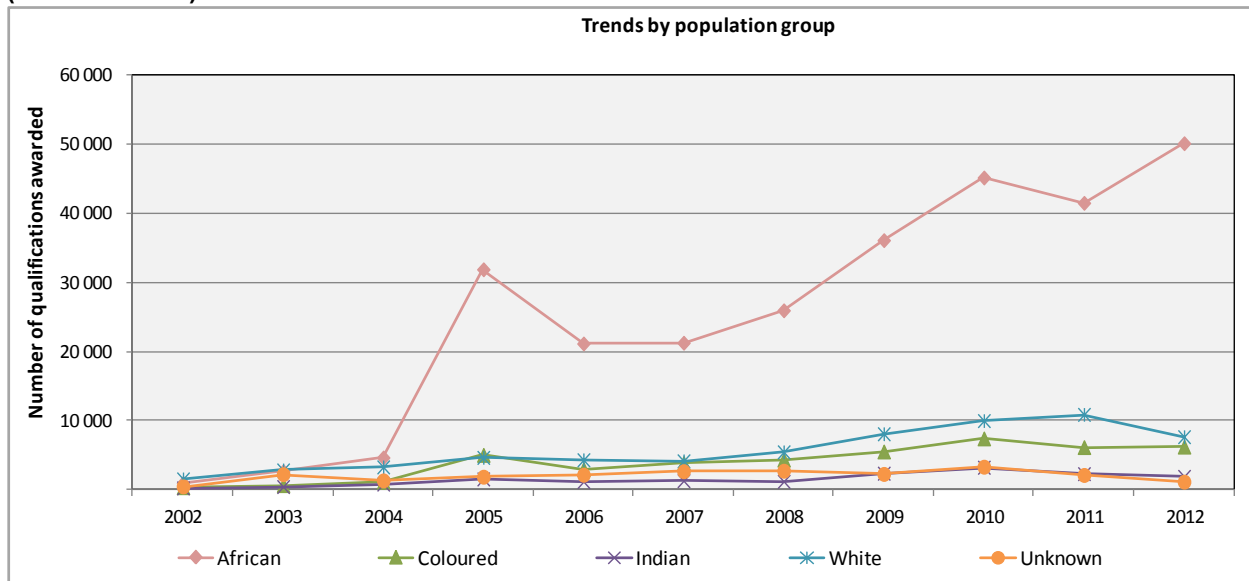
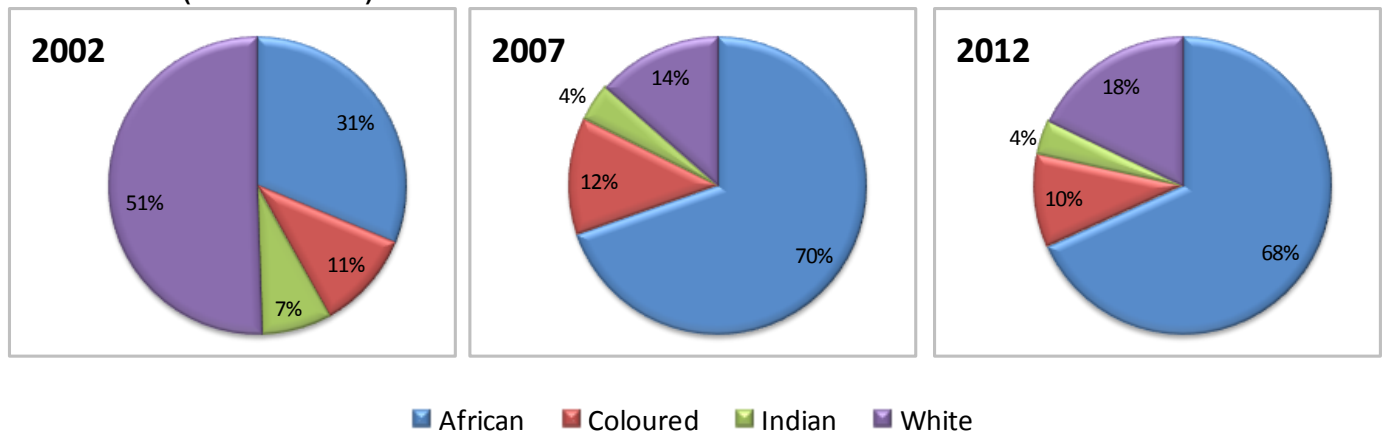


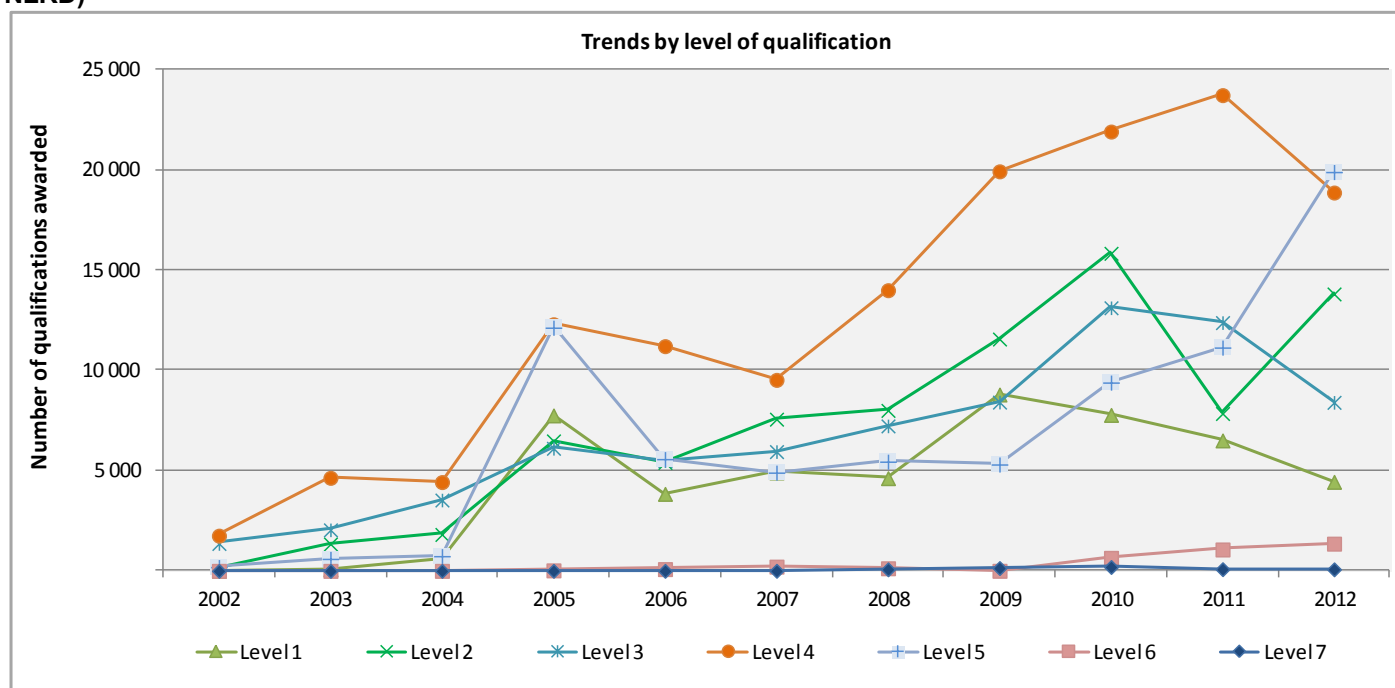
Figure 18: Snapshots of achievements of occupational qualifications by population group in 2002, 2007 and 2012 (source: NLRD)



Achievement trends by occupational qualification level

Figure 19 shows achievement trends by occupational qualification level between 2002 and 2012. Most occupational qualifications in this period were awarded at NQF Level 4, followed by awards at NQF Levels 2 and 5.

Figure 19: Achievement trends for occupational qualifications by NQF level, 2002-2012 (source: NLRD)



Artisan training

The Skills Development Act (RSA 1998) defines an artisan as a person certified as being competent to perform a listed trade (DHET 2014b). There are 125 listed trades in South Africa. Each is identified by a code and located in the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) managed by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). Artisan development is a priority area for skills development in South Africa (DHET 2013d, 2014b). According to the National Development Plan (NDP), by 2030 the country should be producing 30 000 skilled and qualified artisans a year (RSA 2011a), as opposed to the current 13 000 annually (DHET 2014b). In order to become a certified artisan, learners need to complete a theory component, a practical training component, structured workplace-based learning and a Trade Test for the particular trade. INDLELA is the national entity responsible for Trade Tests and certification.

Table 16 shows the numbers of learners respectively entering and completing artisan programmes in the period 2011/12 to 2012/13, the years for which data were readily available. Numbers across the two tables *do not refer to the same cohorts of learners*.

Table 16: Numbers of learners entering and numbers completing artisan training programmes 2011/12-2012/13 (sources: DHET 2014b: 48, National Artisan Development Support Centre [NADSC] National Artisan Programme [NAP] Database)

SETA/ ENTITY	No. enrolled 2011/12	No. enrolled 2012/13	No. completed 2011/12	No. completed 2012/13
AGRISETA	96	70	77	149
CATHSSETA	563	662	282	1 007
CETA	1 849	579	699	520
CHIETA	2 541	1 989	989	1 279
ETDP SETA	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
EWSETA	1 046	1 316	571	37
FOODBEVSETA	15	0	160	36
FP&MSETA	351	584	Data not available	Data not available
HWSETA	Data not available	0	Data not available	Data not available
INDLELA	5 227	5 795	3 392	1 355
LGSETA	413	528	226	305
MERSETA	6 254	4 951	3 155	7 166
MICT SETA	Data not available	0	Data not available	Data not available
MQA	2 525	2 365	2 525	2 035
PSETA	78	53	1	5
SASSETA	Data not available	516	Data not available	Data not available
SERVICES SETA	2 104	984	1 521	841
TETA	1 019	711	208	169
W&R SETA	334	746	176	373
TOTAL	24 415	21 849	14 023	15 277

2.3.2.7 National initiatives towards getting people into the system

There were, and are still ongoing, five long-term national moves towards inclusivity and lifelong learning in addition to public works programmes, Extended Public Works Programmes (EPWPs), the community education and training initiatives of universities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and education and training institutions and offerings that do not necessarily fit within the NQF. The first comprises the move towards a national Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system (see Section 2.1.3.2). The second is the focus on Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) to aid learner transitioning (see Section 2.1.3.2). The third is Adult Education.

Adult Education

There are at least five million adults in South Africa who have not had opportunities to study in the past, or do not currently have opportunities to do so. Adult Education (including Popular Education and Worker Education) attempts to address these gaps in different ways, and to change consciousness in terms of how people view education and society.

Adult Education Centres, Community Colleges and AET qualifications

Adult Education and Training (AET) Centres, which are in the process of becoming Community Colleges (MHET 2013), currently offer a range of learning opportunities, from Adult Education and Training (AET), to second-chance opportunities to complete school, to general skills development programmes. Qualifications include the AET Certificates at Levels 1-4 (AET4 being on NQF Level 1), the General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA), the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and the National Vocational Certificate for Adults (NAVCA). AET is offered in public and private centres.

Integration of AET into the system

The inclusion of AET qualifications in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF), and the move proposed in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013) to integrate AET Centres into Community Colleges, serve to integrate this usually neglected sector into the mainstream education and training system. Other initiatives supporting this integration include the draft Policy for Community Colleges circulated by the DHET for public comment in December 2014, and the work of the Worker Education Task Team (WETT).

Learner access and success in AET, 2011-2012

Table 17 shows learner enrolment in AET Centres by institutional type and programme for 2011 and 2012, the years for which data were readily available. Most adult learners enrolled at public centres in this period.

Table 17: Learner enrolment in AET Centres by institutional type and programme, 2011-2012 (sources of data from which analysis was done: DHET 2013d, 2014b⁵)

Institutional type/ Programme	Public AET Centres 2012	Private AET Centres 2012	All AET Centres 2012	All AET Centres 2011
AET Level 1	24 213	1 148	25 361	27 762
AET Level 2	33 470	1 263	34 733	34 967
AET Level 3	36 253	1 356	37 609	35 074
AET Level 4 (NQF Level 1)	134 276	2 370	136 646	117 910
Grade 10 (NQF Level 2)	258	53	311	213
Grade 11 (NQF Level 3)	213	8	221	265
Grade 12 (NQF Level 4)	71 037	2 049	73 086	71 738
Skills development	6 658	443	7 101	9 705
TOTAL	306 378	8 690	315 068	297 634

Table 18 shows the numbers of learners in public and private AET Centres registered for, writing and passing GETC-ABET Level 4 examinations in 2011 and 2012.

Table 18: Numbers of learners in public and private AET Centres registered for, writing and passing GETC-ABET Level 4 examinations⁶ in 2011 and 2012 (sources of data from which analysis was done: DHET 2013d, 2014b⁷)

YEAR	No. registered to write	No. writing (and % of those registered)	No. passing (and % of those writing)	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered)
2011	96 452	62 044 (64.3%)	17 001(27.4%)	17 001 (17.6%)
2012	90 384	49 856 (55.2%)	18 663 (37.4%)	18 663 (20.7%)

Data and analysis of trends in the AET sector are important developmental areas for future NQF impact studies.

Learnerships, internships and skills programmes: Developments

A fourth national move towards inclusivity involves large-scale education and training initiatives for workers and unemployed people, in the form of SETA-supported learnerships, internships and skills programmes⁸.

⁵ The sources of data for the DHET analyses comprised the Annual Snap Surveys of AET Centres conducted by the DHET in 2011 and 2012.

⁶ The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) at AET (or ABET) Level 4 is located at NQF Level 1 on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) – see Section 6.1.9.

⁷ The sources of data for the DHET analyses comprised the Annual Snap Surveys of AET Centres conducted by the DHET in 2011 and 2012.

⁸ *NQFPedia* defines a skills programme as a part-qualification that is a 'QCTO-accredited learning programme that is occupationally based and which, when completed, may constitute credits towards a qualification registered on the NQF'. Skills programmes are made up of logical groups of unit standards which together constitute training towards a specific skills set. Skills programmes are currently not registered on the NQF in their own right, although most of the SETAs would like them to be, and the Minister of HET has requested that SAQA investigate how to deal with the records of learners' achievements in this arena since the beginning of the NQF.

Overall achievements regarding learnerships

Figure 20 shows the numbers of learnerships achieved in relation to the numbers of occupational qualifications achieved for 2004-2012, the period for which data were available. While higher numbers are needed, the upward trends are in the desired directions.

Multiple learnership opportunities aid transitioning in the system. Figure 21 shows the numbers of learnerships completed by individuals. While over 65 000 people completed a single learnership, over 80 000 each completed two, and a fair number completed between three and six. Two individuals completed 12 learnerships each in this period.

Figure 20: Comparison of learnership and qualification achievement trends, 2004-2012 (source: NLRD)

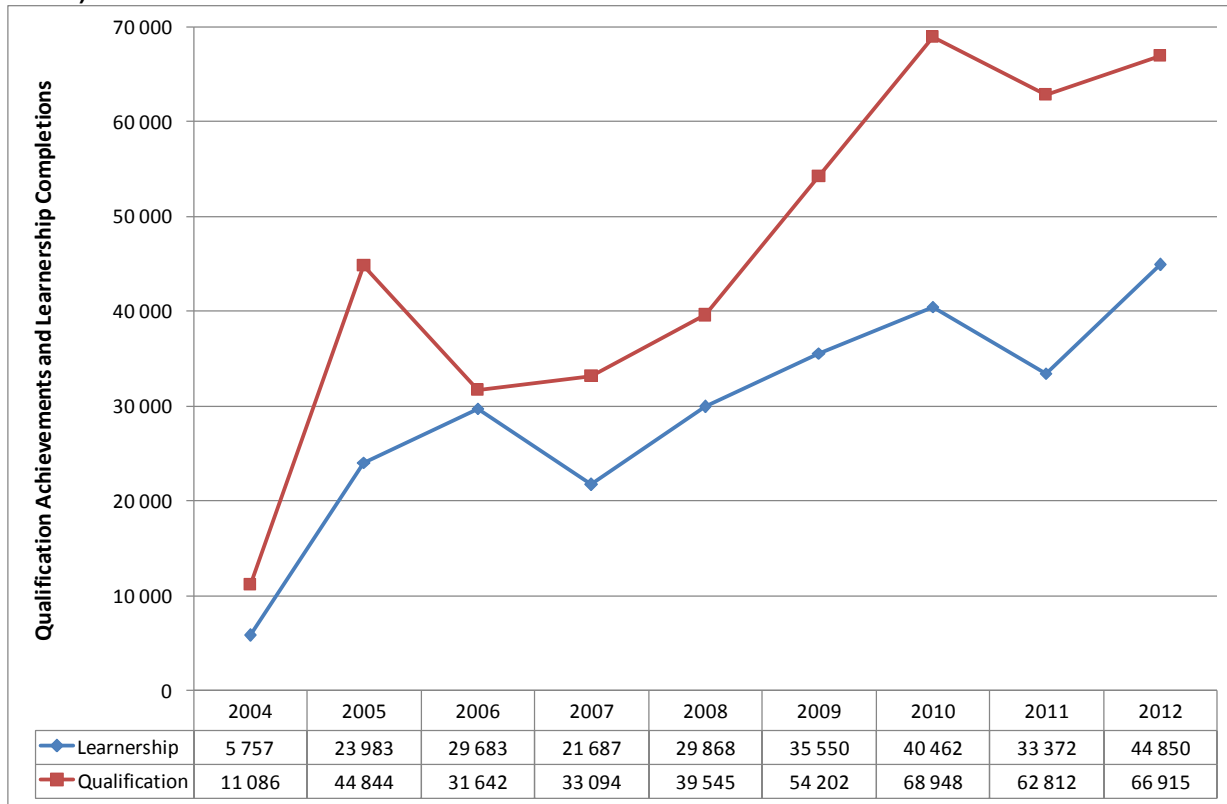
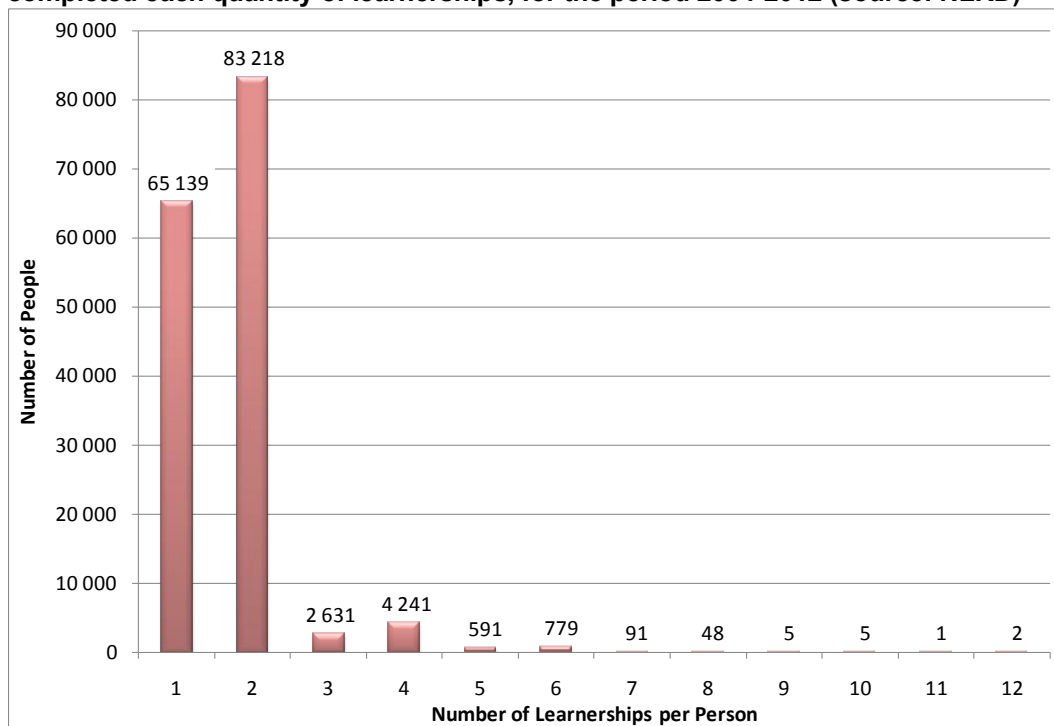


Figure 21: Numbers of learnerships completed per person, by the number of people to have completed each quantity of learnerships, for the period 2004-2012 (source: NLRD)



Learnerships, internships and skills programmes completed

Table 19 shows the numbers of learnerships, internships and skills programmes completed by unemployed and working people. More unemployed than working people registered and were certificated for learnerships in 2011-2012. Fewer unemployed than working people registered and were certificated for skills programmes, but there were significant numbers of unemployed people. 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.

Table 19: Numbers of workers and unemployed people registered and certificated in SETA-supported learning programmes, by programme type and year (sources of data from which analysis was done: DHET 2013d, 2014b9) The numbers of those registered and certificated do not refer to the same people.

YEAR	LEARNERSHIPS		SKILLS PROGRAMMES		INTERNSHIPS		TOTAL
	Achieved (Workers)	Achieved (Unemployed people)	Achieved (Workers)	Achieved (Unemployed people)	Achieved (Workers)	Achieved (Unemployed people)	
2011 Registered	16 371	27 679	71 656	16 250	N/A	3 452	135 408
2011 Certificated	9 646	19 524	71 417	16 110	N/A	878	117 575
2012 Registered	20 678	30 207	64 105	10 482	N/A	6 127	131 599
2012 Certificated	14 399	22 759	68 173	18 318	N/A	2 195	125 844

⁹ The sources of data for the DHET analyses comprise the Annual Snap Surveys of AET Centres conducted by the DHET in 2011 and 2012.

Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign

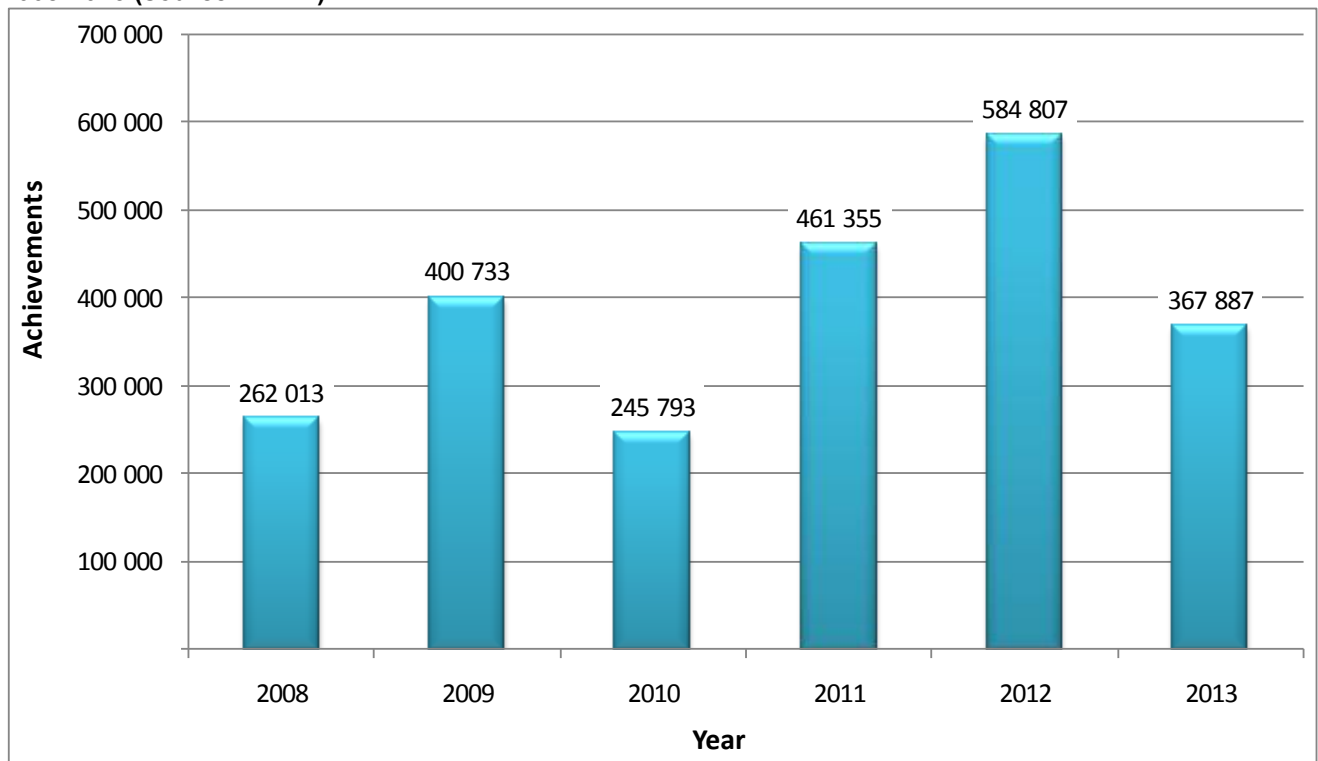
The Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign (Kha Ri Gude) launched in 2008 by the then-national Department of Education comprises a fifth inclusivity initiative. Adult literacy is a challenge in South Africa: over 4.7 million people are functionally illiterate or innumerate.

The campaign seeks to address the rights of all citizens to basic education. It was designed to enable all adults in the country regardless of socio-economic status to become literate and numerate. It targets vulnerable groups, including women, disabled people and elderly people. It provides special packs for blind learners and makes provision for deaf learners. Its reach is nationwide and spans all communities, rural and urban. It is registered at AET Level 1. Kha Ri Gude focuses on teaching reading, writing and numeracy in the mother tongues of learners, who also learn spoken English.

Numbers of learners successfully completing the Kha Ri Gude programme

The Kha Ri Gude programme achieves around 600 000 completed portfolios per year. Figure 22 shows the numbers of successful completions of the Kha Ri Gude programme per year between 2008 and 2013. Learner achievements fluctuate in this period, but at their highest levels are of the same order of magnitude as the numbers of Grade 12 learners achieving the National Senior Certificate (NSC).

Figure 22: Total numbers of learners successfully completing the Kha Ri Gude programme annually, 2008-2013 (source: NLRD)



Numbers of learners successfully completing the Kha Ri Gude programme, by gender, population group and province

Figures 23, 24 and 25 show successful completions of the Kha Ri Gude programme from its inception up to the end of 2013 – the period for which there were audited data – respectively by gender, population

group and province. The majority (71%) of successful learners were women. Most were African. There was a tiny percentage of Coloured people, this group numbering 20 000-25 000 people in all. The provinces with the highest numbers of completing learners were the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, followed by Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Free State.

Figure 23: Total numbers of learners, expressed in percentages, successfully completing the Kha Ri Gude programme up to the end of 2013, by gender (source: NLRD)

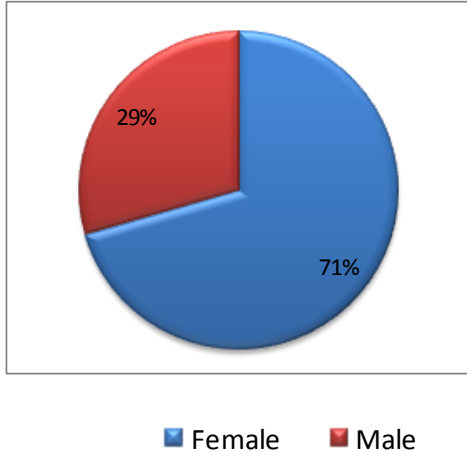


Figure 24: Total numbers of learners, expressed in percentages, successfully completing the Kha Ri Gude programme up to the end of 2013, by population group (source: NLRD)

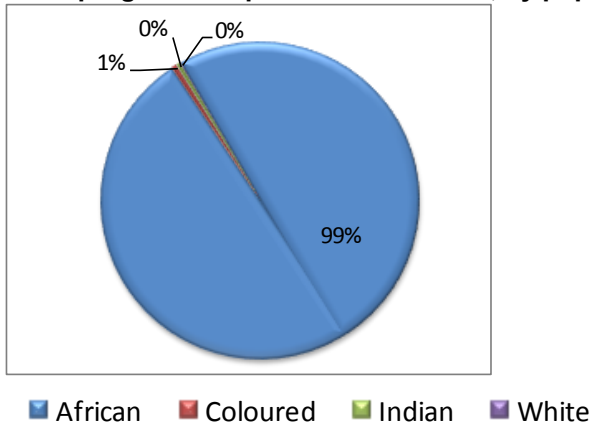
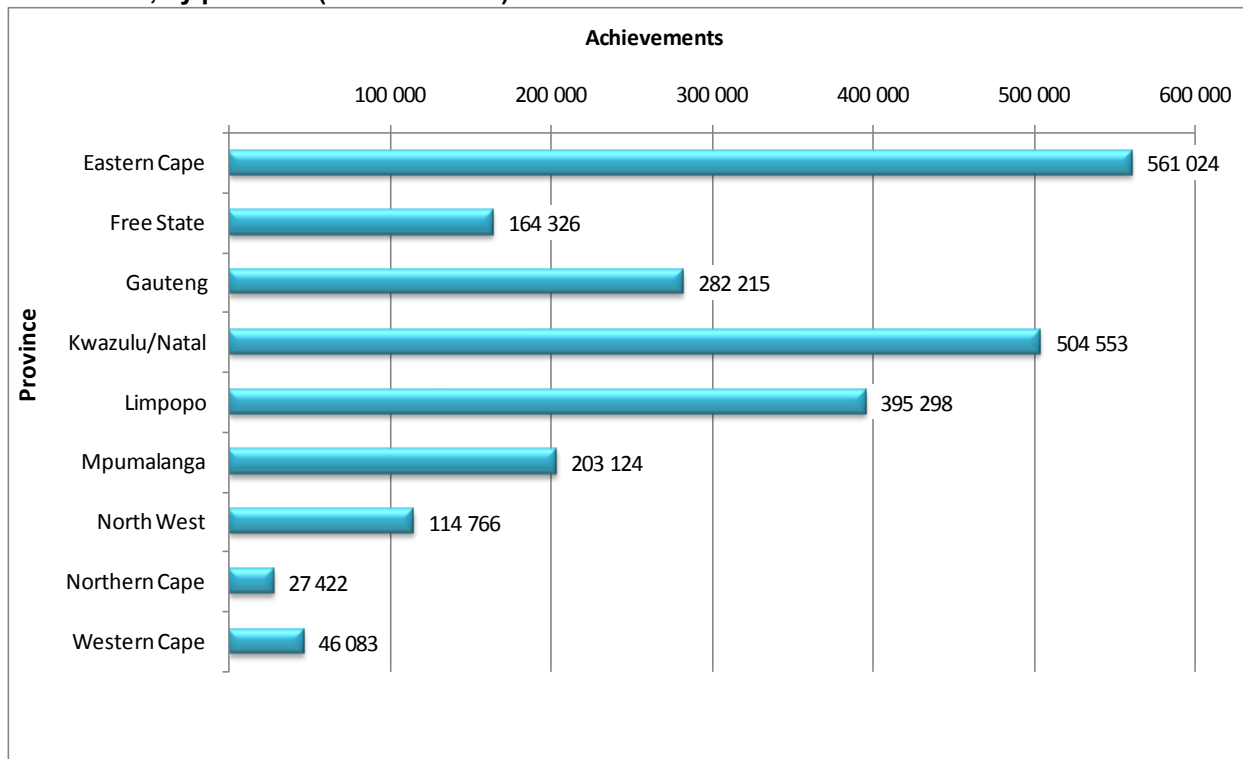


Figure 25: Total numbers of learners successfully completing the Kha Ri Gude programme up to the end of 2013, by province (source: NLRD)



Flexible provision and lifelong learning

Recent SAQA-University of the Western Cape partnership research into *flexible provision and lifelong learning* (Abrahams 2014; Jones and Walters 2015; SAQA-UWC 2015a and 2015b; Walters and Daniels 2015; Walters *et al.* 2015) developed 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.

2.4 Imprint of the NQF on understandings and developments regarding systemic quality and transparency

There was no integrated quality assurance system for education and training under *apartheid*: quality varied considerably across institutions of learning, and was purposefully designed to differ across population groups. The NQF impacted on this system by enabling its integration and national quality assurance. Greater still, was the impact of the NQF regarding *transparency* in the system – the extent to which information about the system was made available to the public, and to which principles and procedures sought to be fair – especially since this focus had never before existed in the country.

2.4.1 Systemic quality and transparency 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) for example focused mainly on quality assuring the examination ‘products’ (exam and test papers, marking memoranda), marking of scripts,

and monitoring the administration of the national 'exit' exams (Umalusi, in SAQA 2015d).

Before 1994 quality assurance in Higher Education was achieved through institutional arrangements. It involved external examiners and the accreditation of individual programmes by the Advisory Council for Universities and Technikons (AUT) (CHE, in SAQA 2015d).

In the Trades and Occupations 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 sub-sector by creating a constitution in line with this Act. The biggest challenge with this system was the legislated unevenness of opportunities available for people from different population groups. Other challenges included the absence of standardised curricula and fees (QCTO, in SAQA 2015d).

2.4.2 Imprint on quality and transparency under the SAQA Act

The centralised quality assurance system ushered in by the SAQA Act (see Section 1.2.4.1) included quality assuring education and training outputs via enabling quality inputs and processes. Despite the criticisms (Section 1.2.4.1) the benefits of the new system included that it provided publicly known quality criteria which worthwhile qualifications should meet and which could scaffold development. It included processes to protect the public from fraudulent practices, and it sought to provide transparency by making information widely available (French 2009).

2.4.2.1 Impact on quality assurance in General and Further Education and Training

When Umalusi took over from SAFCERT it continued to quality assure national external assessments for the qualifications for which it was responsible, but for the first time, these assessments were *linked to national curricula* for all learners. Umalusi enabled the strengthening of the then-new national curricula through research and benchmarking, establishing a new quality assurance model. 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 that succeeded in its exams. The extensive research it conducted, used as a foundation for its policies and processes, and disseminated to the public via workshops, distinguished Umalusi from its predecessor. Umalusi was an Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) registered with SAQA. Its understanding of quality assurance was holistic, in line with NQF objectives.

2.4.2.2 Impact on quality assurance in Higher Education

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. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) established a decentralised quality assurance model that included:

- a system for accrediting programmes at Higher Education Institutions (HEI);
- a national review process 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 (CHE, in SAQA 2015d).

2.4.2.3 Impact on quality assurance and transparency in the Trades and Occupations sector

The integrated system initially included within SAQA a Directorate for Standards Setting and Development (DSSD) responsible for developing qualifications and unit standards, including those for the

Trades and Occupations sector. The SAQA Directorate for Quality Assurance and Assessment (DQAA) accredited the Education and Training Quality Assurers (ETQAs) associated with Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and others.

2.4.2.4 Challenges with the new centralised quality assurance system

The systemic changes under the SAQA Act impacted deeply on *apartheid* structures and processes (see Section 1.2.4.3). There was general agreement around the ‘why’ – the reasons for the changes – but conflict around the ‘what’ and ‘how’ the changes were implemented.

2.4.3 Imprint on quality and transparency under the NQF Act

Early experience of the centralised standard-setting and quality assurance system led to the NQF review and promulgation of the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008) (see Section 1.2.4.3). The move to the devolved and decentered 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. These approaches, together with SAQA registration on the NQF of the Quality Council-submitted qualifications, enabled visible quality assurance processes that have been open to public scrutiny.

2.4.3.1 Transparency features

The NQF Level Descriptors, NLRD, development by SAQA of NQF policies after consultation with the Quality Councils, Verifications Services, Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services, and Career Advice Services (see Sections 1.2.3-1.2.4), enabled transparency by making visible criteria, processes and related information, and through the communities of practice developed around them. These transparency features have been strengthened by the collaboration between SAQA and the Quality Councils, as required by the NQF Act, the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011d) and *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c).

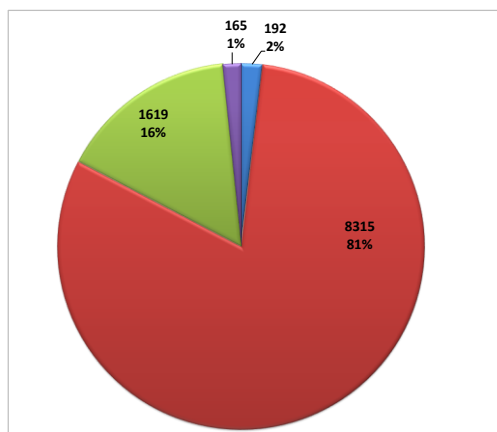
Registration of qualifications, part-qualifications and professional designations over time

Prior to the onset of democracy in South Africa the public usually had to rely on details supplied by providers and career advice agencies or agents when seeking information about qualifications, assessments, learning pathways, other aspects of education and training provision. This environment made it possible for unaccredited ‘fly-by-night’ institutions to flourish. Under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) transparency was enabled through the requirement for existing and new qualifications to be registered on the NQF and to meet specified criteria in order to be registered. The Quality Councils publicised Sub-Framework-specific criteria and processes for the development of qualifications (see Section 1.2.4.3). All registered and legacy qualifications were included in the National Learner’ Records Database (NLRD) (see Section 1.2.4.4).

By the end of 2014, over 1 000 qualifications had been submitted by the Quality Councils to SAQA for registration on the NQF (Section 1.2.3.2). While there were still some areas needing development, the completeness of information in the NLRD (Section 1.2.4.4) was far advanced (SAQA 2015d).

Figure 26 shows qualifications registered on the NQF and represented in the NLRD. Of the total number of qualifications, 81% are in the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), 16% in the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) and 2% in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF). The small number of qualifications in the GFETQSF reflects Umalusi’s desire to have a small number of well quality-assured offerings.

Figure 26: Percentages of qualifications registered on the respective NQF Sub-Frameworks (source: NLRD)



Legend:

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

Table 20 shows the average number of visits per month to the searchable databases of qualifications and part-qualifications in the NLRD from 2007, when usage statistics were first measured. These numbers provide some indication of public awareness of the NQF and the NLRD, which in turn provide some indication of the transparency of the system.

Table 20: Average number of visits per month to the searchable databases of qualifications and part-qualifications in the NLRD (source: NLRD)

Year	Average number per month
2007/8	92 000
2008/9	80 000 (approximate)
2009/10	184 677
2010/11	187 903
2011/12	140 220
2012/13	Not measured
2013/14	199 400

Accreditation of education and training providers, and recognition of professional bodies

Another area of information available via the NLRD is the accreditation status of providers of education and training, and the recognition status of professional bodies (Section 1.2.4.4). Currently there are:

- 118 536 registered assessors;
- 26 quality assurance bodies that load learner achievements onto the NLRD;
- 12 758 accredited providers; and
- 65 recognised professional bodies.

At the time of the study, there were few known fly-by-nights in the Higher Education and Trades and Occupation sectors, although online provision remained a risk. In the General and Further Education and Training (GENFET) sector however, non-quality assured providers of extra lessons and supporting tuition – especially in relation to schooling – had mushroomed and remained a challenge. Four particular challenges remain.

Firstly, there is a burgeoning home schooling sector, and centres that offer tutorial support to parents and learners. Secondly, online provision in this sector is growing. Thirdly, provincial Departments of Education continue to register private schools of poor quality that are not accredited. Gaps between registration and accreditation in these instances need to be addressed urgently.

Fourth, 'Matric Re-write' centres are emerging as a kind of 'school for adults' to support those who have failed matric, or adults who wish to write matric. Some of these centres provide tuition for two or three subjects, others provide fuller ranges of subjects. The *Policy and Criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies* (DBE 2012c: Clause 28) requires that all entities offering the National Senior Certificate or equivalent must ensure that they have been accredited by Umalusi, that their institutions have been registered by the Provincial Departments of Education, and that they are registered as examination centres with an accredited private assessment body or the state. Umalusi and the DBE are in the process of addressing the centres which are operating outside the regulatory requirements.

Verification of learner records

By early 2014, the number of records in the SAQA VeriSearch was 389 000 (see Section 1.2.4.4). Based on readily available data, Figure 27 shows the numbers of requests for transcripts for the seven most recent financial years. The increases in these requests over the years point to increasing compliance and increased knowledge of the Verification Services, and give some indication of the transparency of the system.

Figure 28 shows the numbers of third party requests for verifications of prospective employees for the three most recent financial years. As for the individual requests, numbers increased at rates higher than those at which the population increased in the same period.

Figure 29 shows the numbers of individuals for whom bulk verification requests were received. These numbers fluctuated over time, based on need.

Figure 27: Numbers of individual verification requests across seven financial years (source: Verifications, November 2014)

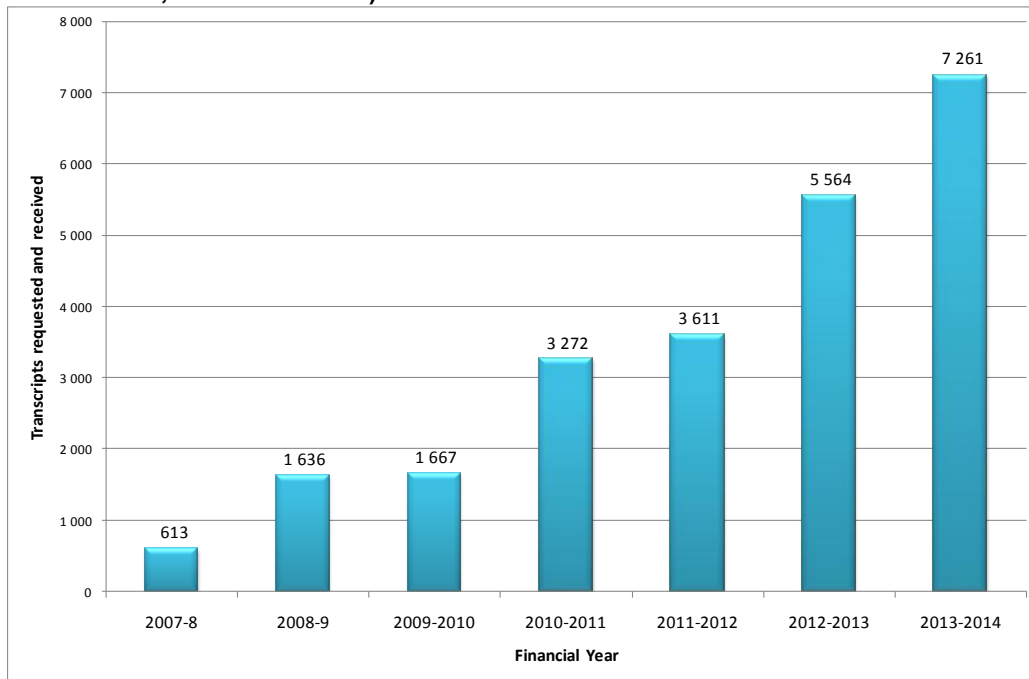


Figure 28: Numbers of people for whom pre-appointment verifications were completed, across seven financial years (source: Verifications, November 2014)

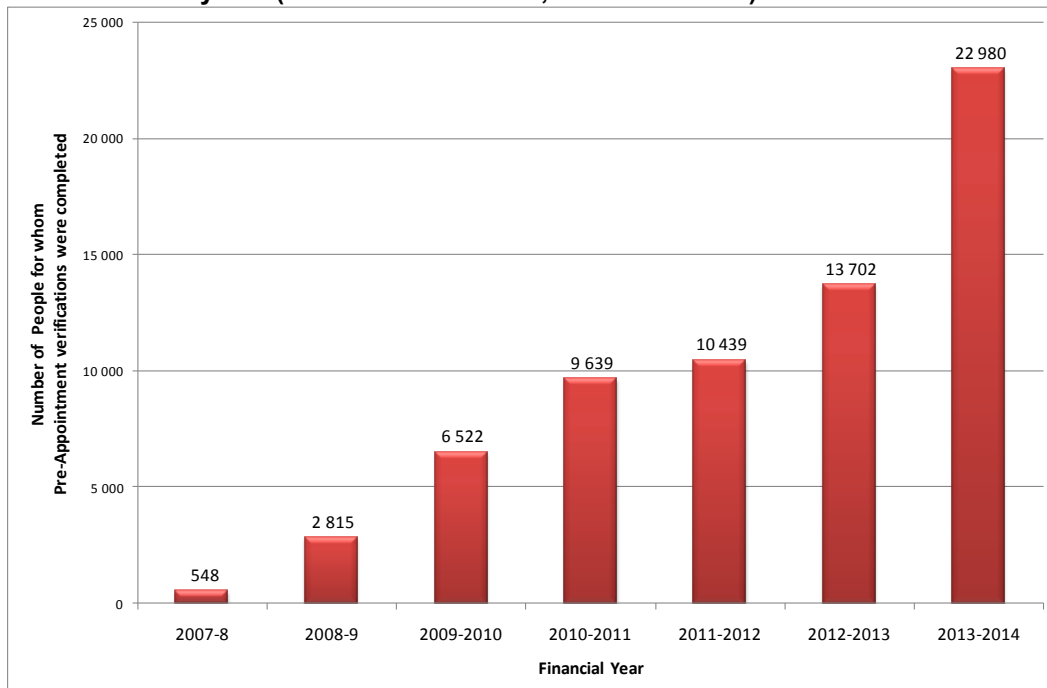
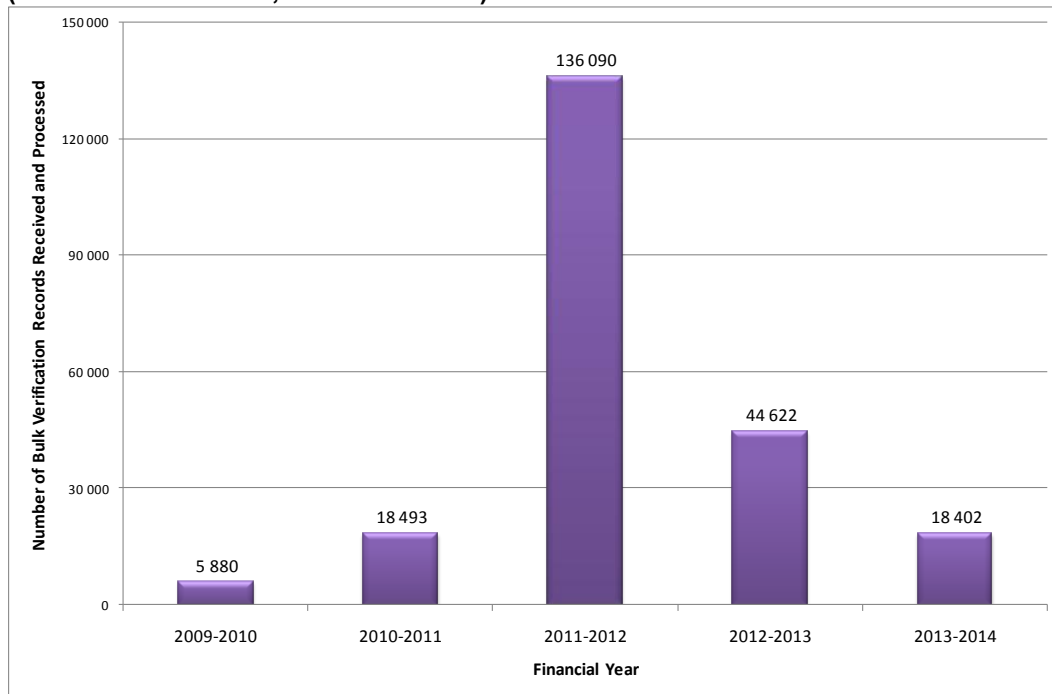


Figure 29: Number of bulk verification records received and processed across five financial years (source: Verifications, November 2014).



Verification services and the detection of fraud

Table 21 shows the numbers and percentages of people who were found to have fraudulent qualifications, and of fraudulent records.

Table 21: Summary analysis of fraudulent qualifications found via the SAQA verifications process from 1 October 2009 to 5 November 2014 (source: Verifications, November 2014)

Number of people found to have fraudulent qualifications	
Number of people with one or more fraudulent qualifications	671
Total people	63 663
% People with one or more fraudulent qualifications	1.1%
Number of fraudulent records found in all records submitted for verification	
Number of fraudulent records	700
Total records	98 051
% Fraudulent records	0.7%

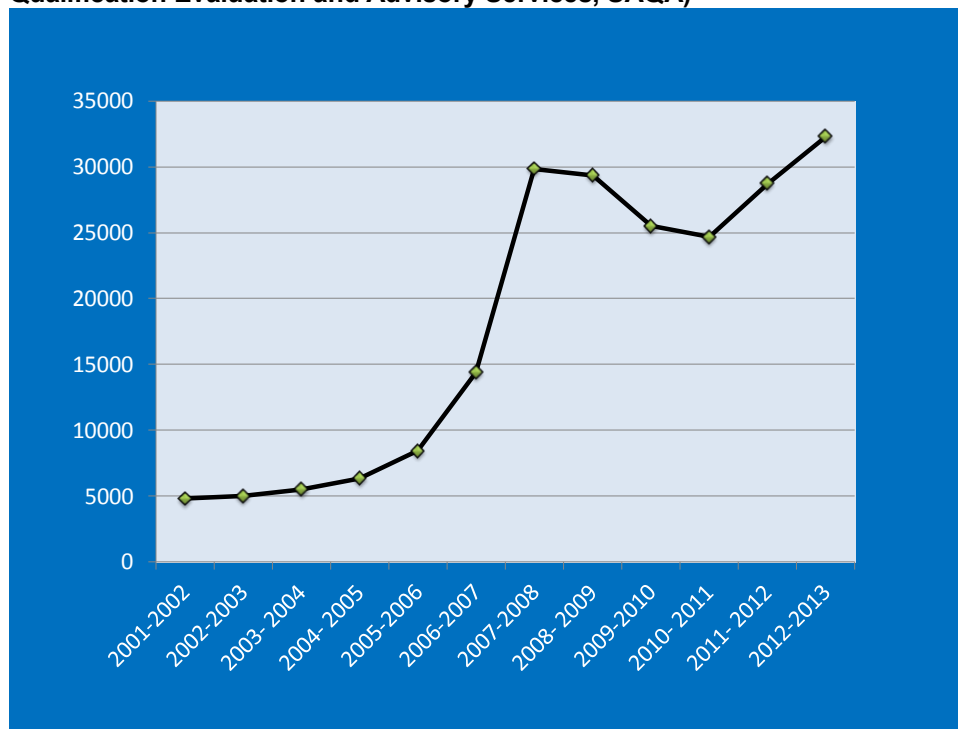
Deepening cross-country transparency through the comparison of qualifications

In the period under review SAQA collaborated mainly with four communities of practice in the evaluation of foreign qualifications, building transparency through dialogue, and publicised processes and tools:

- the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), regarding work and study visas;
- institutions of learning, regarding further study;
- professional bodies, regarding registration and licensing; and
- employers, regarding work.

Trends in requests for SAQA's Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services over time are shown in Figure 30. The steep rise in the number of evaluations since 2005 can be linked to the publication of the Immigration Regulations of 2005 (DHA 2005), which made it mandatory for all applications for work and quota permits and permanent residency to include an evaluation by SAQA of the foreign qualifications held by applicants.

Figure 30: Numbers of foreign qualifications evaluated, 2001-2013 (source: Directorate Foreign Qualification Evaluation and Advisory Services, SAQA)



Deepening transparency through collaboration, legal agreements and accords

Bilateral Agreements

In March 2013 South Africa signed a mutual recognition agreement with the Russian Federation, according to which the relevant qualifications issued in the state format in the Russian Federation and the corresponding qualifications registered on the NQF in South Africa are recognised as being equivalent. Other countries with which South Africa has Bilateral Agreements relating to education and training include the People's Republic of China and Malaysia.

Multi-lateral agreements

In November 2014 SAQA convened a Verifications Seminar – *Building trust: Promoting genuine qualifications in Africa through effective verification* – for the African countries from which South Africa receives most applications for immigration. The purpose of the event was to bring together key stakeholders on the African continent to set up a network for the verification of qualifications, so that fraudulent practices could be countered through formal trust relationships combined with quick, innovative (digital) and effective processes, including the reduction of costs. SAQA has since also played a leading role in the Groningen Declaration Network¹⁰.

Professional accords

Historically transparency has been enhanced by professional bodies entering into international recognition agreements to enable the international mobility of professional skills. For example, the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) is a SAQA-recognised Professional Body and is a signatory to the Washington (1989), Sydney (2001) and Dublin (2002) Accords, among others (see Table 22). Foreign engineering graduates of accredited programmes in signatory countries are regarded as having met the academic requirements for entry to the practice of engineering (International Engineering Alliance 2013).

Table 22: Examples of rights established through selected Engineering Accords (source: Jaftha, Zuzani and Burger 2013: 60)

Signatory country	Washington Accord (1989)	Sydney Accord (2001)	Dublin Accord (2002)
Qualifications	(Undergraduate professional engineering)	(Engineering technologist)	(Engineering technician)
Australia	Full rights	Full rights	Provisional
Bangladesh	Provisional	None	None
Canada	Full rights	Full rights	Full rights
Chinese Taipei	Full rights	Provisional	None
Germany	Provisional	None	None
Hong Kong, China	Full rights	Full rights	None
India	Provisional	None	None
Ireland	Full rights	Full rights	Full rights
Japan	Full rights	None	None
Korea	Full rights	Provisional	None
Malaysia	Full rights	None	None
New Zealand	Full rights	Full rights	Provisional
Pakistan	Provisional	None	None
Russia	Full rights	None	None
Singapore	Full rights	None	None
South Africa	Full rights	Full rights	Full rights
Sri Lanka	Provisional	None	None
Turkey	Full rights	None	None
United Kingdom	Full rights	Full rights	Full rights

¹⁰ The Groningen Declaration seeks common ground in serving the academic and professional mobility needs of citizens world-wide by bringing together key stakeholders in the Digital Student Data Ecosystem. The Groningen Declaration Network aims to make Digital Student Data Portability happen, and to enable citizens across the world to consult and share their authentic educational data with whomever they want, whenever they want.

United States	Full rights	Full rights	Provisional
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Movements of South Africans to other countries: benchmarking potential

Analysis of the movements of South Africans out of the country offers some benchmarking potential for education and training obtained in South Africa, although the measurement of emigration patterns is challenging (Jaftha, Zuzani and Burger 2013). Perceptions of South African qualifications in other countries can assist with *post hoc* benchmarking of South African qualifications. Using a two-component research framework, namely (1) forms of recognition, and (2) recognition methods, a study was undertaken by SAQA in 2012 to investigate how South African qualifications are recognised in Australia.

It was found (*op.cit.*) that Australia’s recognition model differs across four contexts: there is (1) academic recognition by universities, (2) migration recognition by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, (3) employment recognition by professional bodies and workplaces, and (4) registration or licensing recognition by state/territory boards. The processes were found to be less streamlined than those in South Africa: applicants may go through several competency assessments across these contexts. Recognition agreements between Australia and South Africa were found in five professional fields.

Career advice services

Data from an independent evaluation of the NQF and Career Advice Services (UWESO 2014) showed increasing use of the services over time – see Table 23 below, and Section 1.2.4.4.

Table 23: Numbers of people reached through the national Career Advice Services, 2010-2013 (source: UWESO 2014)

Channel	2010/11		2011/12		2012/13	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Telephone	12 000	13 044	18 000	16 180	18 000	41 775
Website/mobisite ¹¹	72 000	59 496	120 000	153 960	120 000	379 809
Radio	1800 000	1900 000	1800 000	1900 000	1800 000	1900 000
Exhibitions	15 000	85 910	20 000	117 549	20 000	203 220
Estimated number of people to be reached	1899 000	2 058 450	1958 000	2187 689	1958 000	2524 804

Awareness and understanding of, and valuing, the South African NQF

In an independent study (Quest 2014), 40 interviews were conducted with NQF policy makers, 370 with NQF policy implementers and 463 with NQF policy beneficiaries, to determine the extent to which the NQF is known, understood and valued.

The study (*op.cit.*) found that among policy makers, 100% of the interviewees knew about the NQF, 67% had deep understanding of the NQF, and this 67% valued it.

Of the 370 policy implementers interviewed, 100% were aware of the NQF, 61% had deep understanding, and 58% valued it.

¹¹ The mobisite became active during the second year of the project.

Of the 463 policy beneficiaries – most of whom were in the 16-35 years age group; spoke isiZulu (46%), isiXhosa (27%), Sesotho (11%) or English (12%); were African (98%); and mostly students (60%) or unemployed (24%) – 39% were found to be ‘somewhat familiar with the NQF’, 39% to be ‘familiar with the NQF’, and 12% were ‘very familiar’. Just over 10% of respondents were ‘not familiar with the NQF’. Most had been exposed to the NQF at career festivals.

2.5 Impact on education and training communities of practice

2.5.1 Communities of practice 1994-1995

The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa in 1990 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 (*ibid.*). The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South Africa’s largest trade union federation for example, “initiated a process of policy development for the education and training of workers” (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). After the first democratic elections in 1994, an Inter-Ministerial Working Group was set up to develop a way forward for the NQF (Lugg 2009: 48).

2.5.2 Communities of practice under the SAQA Act

Under the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995), conflicts between the education and training sectors resurfaced. The Department of Labour (DoL) established 25 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) for the economic sectors. SAQA accredited the SETAs to quality assure training (DoL 1997, Lugg 2009). SAQA set up two types of structures: National Standards Bodies (NSBs) for each of the 12 learning fields identified, and Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs). 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 2001) provided for quality assurance in General and Further Education and Training under Umalusi. There were three dominant entities in the ‘single system’, the DoL, SAQA and the DoE and it is generally accepted that there were conflicts between these role-players around standards and quality assurance.

2.5.3 NQF review and communities of practice

The NQF review (DoE-DoL 2002) revealed some of the understandings of the NQF implementing organisations at the time. The DoE held SAQA responsible for problems relating to NQF implementation. It “...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 2002, in Lugg 2009: 53). The necessary collaborative work between SAQA and Umalusi on the one hand, and SAQA and the CHE on the other, was lacking. The DoL held the CHE responsible for NQF implementation problems, seeing the CHE as “subverting the NQF through its refusal to accept the SETAs as part of the institutional landscape within the Higher Education sector...” (Lugg 2009: 53). The DoE recommended that SAQA be directly under its control while 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.

2.5.4 Communities of practice under the NQF Act

Collaboration between the two education departments, SAQA and the Quality Councils is legislated through the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) (see Section 1.2.4.3). 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)]), and has done so. The NQF Act upon promulgation had an immediate impact on the roles of the education and training system entities within its jurisdiction. SAQA took up its coordination role, leading the processes that resulted in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (2011) and *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 six integrating structures or communities of practice required by the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) emerged. The work of these communities was characterised by negotiation.

2.6 Impact on rules and tools in education and training

It has been shown that the NQF impacted on legislation, policy development, structures, processes, curriculum and ways of relating in the education and training field, and on the ‘rules’ integral to these aspects. Legislation shifted from being split according to population group, to being centralised in ways that generated conflict, to enabling differentiated work in an integrated system. Policy development processes progressed from being top-down to being collaborative and inclusive of the voices of stakeholders. The sub-sectors making up the NQF experienced internal integration to differing degrees. Waves of curriculum reform, especially in the schooling and occupational sectors, settled into curricula which have clearly stipulated content and learning outcomes. There is growing recognition of the importance of an additional NQF implementation tool, that of ‘relational agency’ (Edwards 2010, 2014). The high-level suite of NQF policies developed since promulgation of the NQF Act is now complete. As the country moves into an enhanced implementation phase, deeper collaboration is needed.

2.7 Examples of expanded learning and transformation

The potential for expanded learning and transformation in instances of conflict (Engeström 2001, see Section 1.2.5.3) was realised, for example, in the review of the NQF under the SAQA Act, the subsequent *Joint Policy Statement* (DoE-DoL 2007) and the development, promulgation and implementation of the NQF Act. The seven steps in Engeström’s (2001) cycle of change were followed in this process.

First, ‘questioning the primary contradiction’ took the form of criticisms of, and resistance to, the centralised standard-setting and quality assurance under the SAQA Act. The NQF review involved ‘analysis and identifying secondary contradictions’. Third, the *Joint Policy Statement* helped to ‘model a new solution’. Fourth, the NQF Act comprised ‘the new model’. Fifth, when the ‘new NQF model’ was implemented, there were ‘tertiary contradictions’ and ‘resistance’. Sixth, the period in which the high-level suite of NQF-related policies was developed collaboratively, involved ‘re-alignment between neighbours’ and ‘reflection’. If the policy basket remains stable, the system will be able to move into the seventh stage of ‘consolidating the new practices’. This cycle took 15 years.

A second example – that of the implementation of RPL and movements towards a national RPL system can be analysed, again using the seven stages of Engeström’s (2001) cycle of expansive learning and transformation (see Section 2.5.3). First, in the 2010 national workshop *Expanding existing islands of*

excellent RPL practice, questions were asked regarding what the blockages were, in the desire to move to a national system. Second, the outputs of the 2010 workshop were analysed to understand the barriers. Third, a number of solutions to these barriers were presented and debated by national and international RPL researchers and practitioners, at the 2011 conference *Expanding existing islands of excellent RPL practices*. Fourth, the main conference output, the *Resolution and Working Document on RPL*, modelled a way forward. Fifth, the working document was implemented, including the establishment of an RPL Reference Group and revision of national RPL policy, and the establishment of the Ministerial Task Team on RPL and its work on addressing legislative barriers. Sixth, sectoral alignment took place through a number of national strategic RPL initiatives. Seventh, known successful practices and tools were shared at the 2014 *National RPL Conference: Tried-and-tested, tools, templates*. This process took five years.

These are but two examples of several transformations in education and training. In the interest of further transformation, leaders for learning could deliberately seek to work through the seven steps of 'expansive learning' (Engeström 2001).

3. Summary reflections on the key findings of the study

Section 3 presents reflections on the study in general, on progress in relation to the Human Resource Development Strategy (DHET 2010) and White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013), and on the implications of the methodology followed for the research.

3.1 Reflections on the overall findings of the study

3.1.1 *Achievement of dialogue around the NQF and its impact*

What the NQF in South Africa comprises was defined in Section 1 of this booklet. Lessons from previous NQF impact studies were considered; the 2014 study (SAQA 2015d) was only the fourth of its kind in the world. There was broad agreement between SAQA and the Quality Councils on what the 2014 study would cover, including the theoretical framework to be used. The Departments of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Basic Education (DBE) and the three Quality Councils provided data/first-level analyses for the research. Each of the Quality Councils contributed substantial sections for the full report on which this booklet is based, on how the NQF had impacted on structures, communities, practices, understandings, approaches and developments in their Sub-Framework contexts. SAQA and the Quality Councils commented on each other's narratives and these comments were taken into account. It is important to acknowledge these communications, collaborations and co-reflections as achievements of dialogue between the entities overseeing the education and training system.

3.1.2 *Imprints of the NQF on education and training*

3.1.2.1 *Shifts in understanding*

Evidence of the imprint of the NQF on the education and training system was presented in Section 2. The section showed how understandings of each of the NQF objectives – systemic integration, transparency, quality, redress and learner access and progression – had deepened over time. While these aspects were acknowledged as being complex from the start (French 2009), initially their physical, structural dimensions came to the fore. Over time, differentiation and the Sub-Framework nuances were understood more deeply, and enabled. Focus turned to the integration of processes and communities of practice, 'deep access' to knowledge and skills, and ways to support learners to succeed. These developments do not necessarily mean that all of the processes in the system are working optimally. Rather, there are now working processes and communities of practice through which to address the issues.

3.1.2.2 *Learner access, success and redress: trends alongside NQF policy development and implementation*

Some of the trends in redress and learner access/success were found to be positive, some were not and some of the patterns were found to be progressing in the right directions but too slowly.

Schooling

In the GFETQSF context, while learners were found to be accessing the system, overall learner retention and success rates were not yet following the desired trends. There was some upward movement in

South Africa's positioning in the international PIRLS and TIMSS research (Mullis *et al* 2001, 2006; TIMSS 2008, 2011).

Higher Education

In the HEQSF context, redress, access and success were found to be moving in the desired directions, if slowly, over time.

Qualifications for trades and occupations

In the OQSF context, while there were increased access and redress, more learners needed to access the system and progress through it successfully. More longitudinal data are needed on access to, and success in, training for artisans.

College sector, Adult Education and Training (AET), learnerships, internships, skills programmes and inclusivity

Low levels of learner success were found in the TVET College and Adult Education sectors. Importantly, there were islands of excellent practice in these sectors – individual institutions with high access and success rates. These practices need to be investigated, understood and made visible in order to expand throughout the system. There were signs that learnerships, internships and skills programmes were well utilised by both workers and unemployed people, with high success rates. High numbers of learners accessed the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Programme in geographical areas where it was needed. This initiative needs to continue until there is no longer a demand for it. More longitudinal data are also needed on access to, and success in, programmes offered at the TVET Colleges, in AET, and learnerships, internships and skills programmes. Steps were taken towards the desired national Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system. Continued national support is needed for these developments to continue.

3.1.2.3 Education and training communities of practice, tools, rules and transparency

It was shown that NQF implementation under the SAQA Act 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. Addressing these differences led to the *Joint Policy Statement* (DoE-DoL 2007), the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) and differentiated communities of practice for the three NQF Sub-Frameworks, together with integrating communities like the Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee and the CEO Committee (see Section 1.2.4.3).

3.1.2.4 Tools and rules for education and training

Structures versus pathways

From structural integration, attention has moved to 'learning pathways', 'articulation' and 'articulated pathways'. Articulation is currently understood to take at least three forms, each of which can be supported to enable learner success (see Section 2.1.3.4). From 'top-down' policies, collaborative tools such as the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011d) and the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) were developed consultatively (see Section 1.2.3.5-6), and initiatives to enhance 'relational agency' (Edwards 2014) have commenced (Sections 2.6 and 5).

Modes of provision

Attention was drawn to the fact that the NQF and debates around integration are located in wider and

centuries-old debates around knowledge and the politics of knowledge (see Section 2.1.3.3). 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 (SAQA-UWC 2015a,b).

National legislation

The NQF impacted on standard setting and quality assurance in education and training through the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995) and the associated General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (Act 58 of 2001), the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997), and the Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998), which laid out the responsibilities of SAQA, Umalusi, the CHE, the National Skills Authority (NSA) and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

Further moves to integrate the system under the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008) shifted these responsibilities (see the Amendment Acts for these entities) and led to collaborative development of a new suite of NQF policies (see Section 1.2.3) appropriate for the newly devolved, differentiated, coordinated system. Integration of the institutional landscape, together with changing communities of practice and changes in legislation, ushered in successive waves of change that reached every aspect of the system.

Curriculum

The form and content of curricula were used as tools to achieve the redress and learner access, success and progression sought. The transformation of the school curriculum – from differing curricula for different population groups and provinces in the country under *apartheid*, through several waves of transition under the SAQA Act, to the current Curriculum and Policy Statements – is an example of this impact. Higher Education curricula under the SAQA and NQF Acts progressively involved more ‘scaffolding’ in the form of student support, as awareness of trends in learner success and progression rates grew and the need was realised (see for example SAQA-UWC 2015a,b).

In the Trades and Occupations sector, unit standards with learning outcomes and assessment standards were developed. Many were taken up by providers and learners, and many were not (Van Zyl 2009). Under the NQF Act, the QCTO required three types of standards – Knowledge Standards, Practical Standards and Workplace Experience Standards – each aligned to a curriculum. The National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) with elements of both general and vocational education was introduced. The envisaged phasing out of the National Technical (N) qualifications, seen to be lacking in theory, was reversed due to demand. Initially in the attempts to integrate and transform in the schooling and occupational sectors the form of curricula was privileged over content. By the time the NQF Act was promulgated, the detailed specification of content had returned with new clarity and comprehensiveness, and with more focused learning outcomes. Regarding curriculum, the means to achieve the NQF objectives under the SAQA and the NQF Acts developed over time.

NQF workshops and conferences

NQF-related conferences, workshops, colloquia and other public events were further examples of tools that enabled dialogue and widened the development of systemic understanding (see Section 2.1.3.4).

3.1.2.5 Impact of the NQF on understandings and developments regarding quality and transparency

Education and training in apartheid South Africa were neither transparent nor fair. The 2014 NQF Impact Study pointed to some of the results of transparency initiatives such as visible quality assurance

processes and criteria within Sub-Frameworks; publicised criteria for developing and registering qualifications and for recognising professional bodies; national policies for RPL and CAT; national services for career advice, NQF assistance, qualification Verification Services, Foreign Qualification Evaluation and Advisory Services; and a National Learners' Records Database with accessible learner achievement and related information (see Section 2.4).

3.2 Progress in relation to the Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS-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 HRDS-SA (RSA 2009a) and White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013). The National Development Plan (RSA 2011a) emphasises *inter alia* the importance of improving the quality of education, skills development and innovation. The New Growth Path (RSA 2011b) aims to create decent work, reducing inequality and defeating poverty; 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; and sets targets for jobs. Improvements in education and skill levels are a fundamental prerequisite for achieving many of these goals. While these national strategies are a big part of the implementation context of the NQF, and successful implementation of the NQF is central for their success, the Human Resources Development Strategy (RSA 2010) and White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (PSET) (MHET 2013) provide immediate targets that the NQF needs to address.

3.2.1 NQF implementation and the Human Resource Development Strategy in South Africa

The 2010-2030 Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) for South Africa (RSA 2009a) details a number of strategic objectives, indicators and indicative actions, including highlighting priorities and assigning targets for 2010-2030. It aims to optimise the efficacy of human resources with respect to the developmental agenda in South Africa¹².

1. Ensuring universal access to quality Early Childhood Development (ECD).

The 2014 study found that the numbers of learners enrolling for Grade R had increased steadily since 2006 (see Section 2.3.2.1), and that enrolment was likely to be universal by 2030 but had not yet been achieved by 2014. Other ECD data were not readily available and were thus not included, but need to be part of future NQF impact studies.

2. Eradicating adult illiteracy.

The latest Census data (StatsSA 2011) showed that 8.6% of adults in the country had no education: this figure can be taken as a rough proxy for illiteracy. Learner numbers and achievement patterns in the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Programme, and their demographic profiles and contextual locations (see Section 2.3.2.7), suggest that the programme is steadily addressing the issue.

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

¹² 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 Strategy for Growth and Investment for South Africa (ASGISA), 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.

The schools data (see Section 2.3.2.1) showed that the drop-out rates across school grades were not yet moving in the desired directions. In addition the 'actual' success rates showed that staying at school did not necessarily guarantee success: around one eighth of learners enrolled for Grade 1 went on to pass the NSC exams in the years analysed (Section 2.3.2.3). Research and development is urgently needed to understand and address the deep reasons for these patterns.

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 last Census data (StatsSA 2011) showed the percentages of adults in the country with particular levels of qualifications: in 2011, just over 40% had NQF Level 4 qualifications and higher. Progress could be assessed in future census data. Other data available in 2014 for enrolments and achievements in learnerships, internships, and skills programmes showed access to learning opportunities for employed and unemployed people (see Section 2.3.2.7); longitudinal data of this kind would show the extent of progress in these areas.

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

Data and analyses from the 2014 NQF Impact Study could be used as part of a baseline to assess this type of progression.

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

Trends regarding redress and learner access and success varied across the sub-sectors of the NQF (see Sections 2.2 and 2.3), with some patterns moving in the desired directions, and some not. The trends need to continue to be tracked.

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

Data and analyses from the 2014 NQF Impact Study could be used as part of a baseline to assess this type of progression.

More data were needed than were included in the study in order to measure the extent to which the following HRD targets had been reached:

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

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

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

11. 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.

12. **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.**

3.2.2 NQF implementation and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (PSET) (referred to in this section as the White Paper)(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 data in the 2014 NQF Impact Study provided pictures of progress regarding the developmental areas required.

3.2.2.1 NQF, SAQA and the Quality Councils

The White Paper makes clear that the NQF in its present form, the NQF objectives and the existing structures and remits of the main NQF partners will remain. SAQA must play a leadership role in guiding the further development of systemic articulation. There must be a national RPL strategy. PSET entities must comply with SAQA and Quality Council requirements (MHET 2013).

Relevant data from the 2014 NQF Impact Study

The 2014 study pointed to enhanced understandings of articulation over time (Section 2.1.3.3), and work undertaken towards a national RPL strategy (Sections 2.1.3 and 2.2.3). SAQA was planning research into expanding College-Higher Education articulation. The DHET (in 2014) had developed a Draft Articulation Framework. There was SAQA-Quality Council collaboration in the development of the suite of NQF policies under the NQF Act (Section 1.2.3) and Quality Council development of related Sub-Framework policies. The extent to which PSET institutions are complying with these policies needs to feature in future NQF impact studies.

3.2.2.2 PSET institutions

The White Paper 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 (HEI); 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 SAQA, the NQF Sub-Framework coordinating body. Education institutions under the authority of other national government departments are also included in this work as the DHET, through the Quality Councils, is responsible for assuring the quality of education and training provision in these entities. The White Paper also emphasises the need to strengthen datasets on private PSET.

Relevant data from the 2014 NQF Impact Study

The Quality Council initiatives described in the full report on which this booklet is based speak to strengthening these PSET institutions. For a fuller picture, more detail regarding the initiatives of the two education departments than feature in the 2014 study would need to be included. Data on learner achievements (see Section 2.3) also speak to capacity.

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

Relevant data from the 2014 NQF Impact Study

In the full report on which this booklet is based, Umalusi and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) detail considerable work already accomplished towards strengthening existing qualifications and developing the new ones required. SAQA research into learning pathways (Section 2.5) also highlights qualifications needs.

3.2.2.4 Higher Education

The importance of articulation between qualifications offered at Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and those offered in other PSET institutions is emphasised, as is quality and 'purposeful differentiation'. The current foci on redress, student access, success and progression, and stimulating postgraduate study need to remain and to improve. Section 3.2.2.1 speaks to these requirements. The data and analyses on learner achievements (see Section 2.3) show progress regarding redress, student access, success and progression.

3.2.2.5 Targets

The White Paper sets targets to be achieved by 2030 for successful learner/ student achievement in the TVET College, Higher Education and artisan sectors.

- For TVET Colleges, one million learners by 2015, and 2.5 million by 2030, with qualitative improvement.
- 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 also states the intentions of the Minister (MHET) to develop strategic policy frameworks to guide the improvement of access to, and success in, post-school education and training for people with disabilities; encourage the expansion of distance learning; and provide free PSET for those who cannot afford to pay.

Relevant data from the 2014 NQF Impact Study

Data on learner achievements (see Section 2.3) create a baseline from which to measure progress towards these targets.

3.3 Implications of methodological choices

Impact studies usually involve empirical investigation, with carefully constructed indicators designed to show change in relation to a particular phenomenon. In the South African NQF study, the two broad indicators of 'moves towards systemic integration' and 'beneficiary gain' were selected because: (1) what was needed were aspects that could be evaluated *over extended time*; and (2) the Quality Councils were at different stages of development at the start of the study, preventing the use of detailed uniform indicators.

The methodology included:

- documentary analysis of the ‘NQF policy basket’ and related developments;
- 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 (CHAT) categories and principles (Engeström 1987, 2001), and ‘expansive learning for transformation’ (Engeström 2001) as the theory of change.

3.3.1 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.

The CHAT categories and expansive learning spiral assisted:

- 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 were involved;
- retrospective reflection on why a successful activity was successful; and
- ensuring that the elements necessary for transformation were present.

3.3.2 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. One limitation of this approach was that time and resources did not permit the inclusion of wider stakeholder inputs. 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. While there are elements of stakeholder voices throughout the booklet and the larger report on which it is based, in-depth focus group interviews would have strengthened the triangulation of information.

A second limitation was, due to the developmental stage of the leading NQF organisations when the 2014 study commenced, neither a ‘logframe’ (Hercules 2015) nor large-scale statistical verification of data were used. The 2014 study was therefore in effect more an evaluation of NQF implementation than of the impact of the NQF (Hercules 2015).

4. Recommendations

The recommendations from the study are as follows.

First, to **enhance understanding of, and developments in, systemic integration and articulation**, it is recommended that a full evidence-based map of learning pathways within and between the NQF Sub-Frameworks be developed. Existing research and developmental initiatives that support the learning pathways, including the implementation of national RPL and CAT policies, and flexible provision, need to be expanded. Relational work between the NQF partners responsible for articulation should increase.

Second, the trends identified in the study regarding **redress and learner access, success and progression** need to be used for 'periodic assessment of progress' where the trends are in the desired directions, and 'developmental initiatives plus assessment of progress' where the trends are not yet in the desired directions. Advance planning is needed to generate the data required for analysis linked to this work. 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 the development of occupational learning pathways need to be found. The teams of representatives of the different NQF partners that are required 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 uses of and challenges relating to the NQF transparency tools such as Level Descriptors as learning outcomes, developing and registering qualifications, CAT policy and other NQF-related services already progressing apace need to be understood and addressed. Administrative justice needs to be promoted.

Fifth, regarding **simplification of the NQF**, the management of the proliferation of qualifications and the de-registration of qualifications and part-qualifications not used, needs to be prioritised.

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

Seventh, a **working group** made up of representatives from each of the main NQF partners needs to be established to develop a small number of high-level, integrated, differentiated 'stretch' indicators for the next NQF impact study. The support of the CEO Committee would be useful in this regard. In order to report against these indicators in the time period agreed, the research required – *what* is to be researched, and *how* it is to be researched – **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 must be involved** in the advance planning of the studies. A **logframe** and **statistical verification of data and trends** need to be included.

5. Closing comments

The 2014 NQF Impact Study captured the main shifts in the education and training system with the implementation of the SAQA and NQF Acts, thereby providing some evidence of the imprint of the NQF on the system. Conflicts under the SAQA Act were shown to have been addressed with structures and processes for greater communication and collaboration under the NQF Act. The system was shown to have grown through successive waves of structural and legislative changes. In order to progress further, these elements need to remain stable so that the focus can shift fully to quality of the delivery and learning. Relational agency (Edwards 2014) is a valuable tool for this work.

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 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.

Engeström's (2001) cycle for 'expansive learning for transformation' proved to be valuable. Its seven steps for transformation were shown to be followed over a period of around 15 years for the development of the NQF, and five years of work on bridging islands of excellent RPL practice towards a national RPL system. While there have been other transformations in education and training, these were the two examples selected for this booklet. In the interests of further transformation in the system, it is strongly recommended that leaders for learning in the country seek to identify and work through the seven steps needed for expanded learning.

Future NQF impact study work needs to be conducted with an expanded reference group of specialists that will collaboratively develop a logframe and the means to verify data, using an expanded range of qualitative and statistical techniques.

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