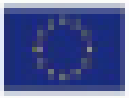
The Conceptualisation and Use of Learning Outcomes in South Africa

SA-EU Policy Learning Forum on Learning Outcomes

Emperor's Palace, 24 and 25 June 2019



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Contents of the presentation

- Background
- Historical passage to the SAQA Act
- Use of learning outcomes in the:
  - SAQA Act
  - NQF Act - Three QCs
  - Successes
  - Challenges
- Use of learning outcomes in evaluation of Foreign Qualifications
- Trends influencing Future definitions, writing and use of learning outcomes

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Background

Title: ***The conceptualisation and use of learning outcomes in South Africa***

A **qualitative desktop study**

Two qualitative research methods:

- **Historical educational research;**
- **Narrative research**

Two 'lenses'**:**

- **Relational agency (Edwards);**
- **Actor Network theory (ANT)**

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Background

- Learning outcomes express what a successful learner knows, understands, and can do; and are contextually demonstrated end products of specific learning processes which include knowledge, skills and values (Adams: 2015)

- Colonialism and *Apartheid*: Legalised and institutionalised a system of racism and discrimination.

- Through learning outcomes in differentiated curricula, entrenched the inequities embedded in Bantu Education and in the wider *Apartheid* doctrine.

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Historical passage to the SAQA Act

1935: A **departmental Committee on Native Education**
1936: **The Welsh Commission**
1951: **The Eiselen Commission**
1954: Bantu Education Act
1955: The Freedom Charter
1960: Sharpville Massacre
1976: Uprisings (16 June 1976)
1989: NUMSA proposal
1991: COSATU accepts proposal
1992: NEPI report
1994: NEPI and CEPD reports
1995: RDP
1995: SAQA Act promulgated

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Why a NQF ?

Why was the eventual promulgation of the SAQA Act, and the establishment of the NQF so important?

- It was a key transformation, access, redress, mobility and quality assurance mechanism;
- An integrated approach to education and training;
- Build ‘bridges’ between the workplace and the classroom;
- Enhance lifelong learning opportunities;
- Learning outcomes must be at the heart of qualifications and standards, thereby furthering the ideal of an integrated system;
- The need to democratise education and training opportunities for all;
- A response to globalisation.

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Integrated education and training/Integrated approach

Integrated education and training: "provides participants with simultaneous theoretical teaching and learning in broader generic knowledge and skills, and training for a specific occupation" (Schutte &Blythe,1996)

An integrated approach: a view of learning which rejects a rigid division between academic/applied; theory/practice; knowledge/skills; head/hand (White Paper, 1995).

A **conceptual shi**ft from integrated education and training to an integrated approach.

The original vision of a structural integration of education and training in a single Ministry became **two Ministries (SAQA Act, 1995) - DoE and DoL**

The envisaged **single Ministry (NQF Act, 2008) - DHET**

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SAQA Board and establishment of the NQF

The SAQA Act, No. 58 of 1995 established the representative SAQA Board.

The roles of SAQA Board:

- **Establish the standard and qualifications setting mechanism: National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and Standard Generating Bodies (SGBs);**
- **Establish and oversee the quality assurance system: ETQAs;**
- **Implement the Management Information System (the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD);**
- **Publish the Regulations to establish the NQF - Regulation 452 of 1998; and the ETQAs - Regulation 1127 of 1998;**
- **Develop and publish Policies to underpin the development and implementation of the NQF, Quality assurance system;**
- **Ensure SAQA remained a 'going concern'; and**
- **Audit the ETQAs.**

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Conceptualisation

SAQA Act period	NQF Act period
The range of knowledge, competences and skills that would exist between holders of the same qualification would be non-discriminatory, non-racial and non-sexist	The range of knowledge, competences and skills that would exist between holders of the same qualification would be non-discriminatory, non-racial and non-sexist
Enhance learning and make the learning explicit/transparent; and enable comparability and equivalence 'mapping'	Enhance learning and make the learning explicit/transparent and enable comparability and equivalence 'mapping'
Make explicit the social uses of qualifications which required a social construct - democratic participation of stakeholders, intellectual scrutiny and resource considerations	Make explicit the social uses of qualifications which required a social construct - democratic participation of stakeholders, intellectual scrutiny and resource considerations
Explicitly Underpinned by critical cross-field outcomes	Critical cross-field outcomes implicit

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Conceptualisation

SAQA Act period	NQF Act period
Emphasis on the actual learning and knowledge, skills and competences	Emphasis on the actual learning and knowledge, skills and competences
Reflect knowledge; be flexible enough to reflect the needs of society and the needs of the individual	Reflect knowledge; be flexible enough to reflect the needs of society and the needs of the individual
Strong enabler s for RPL and Articulation	Strong enabler s for RPL and Articulation
Bridges between classroom and workplace: Theory and practice; knowledge and applied learning	Bridges between classroom and workplace: Theory and practice; knowledge and applied learning

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Conceptualisation

SAQA Act period	NQF Act period
Have a defined purpose/purposes and intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning	Have a defined purpose/purposes and intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning
Add value to the qualifying learner in terms of enrichment of the person, e.g. opening up of access routes to additional education and training	Add value to the qualifying learner in terms of enrichment of the person, e.g. opening up of access routes to additional education and training
Provide benefits to society and the economy	Provide benefits to society and the economy
Have both specific and critical cross-field outcomes which promote lifelong learning	Have both specific and critical cross-field outcomes which promote lifelong learning
Be internationally comparable	Be internationally comparable

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Critical cross-field outcomes

They describe the qualities that the NQF identifies for development in students, regardless of the specific area or content of learning (Isaacs & Nkomo, 2012):

- Problem solving using critical and creative thinking skills
- Working effectively with others/team, group, organisation
- Organising and managing oneself
- Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information
- Communicating effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills
- Using science and technology effectively and critically (environment)
- Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems
- Contributing to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the society at large by reflecting, participating, sensitive, exploring opportunities, and being entrepreneurial

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Uses of Learning outcomes

The following were and still are the **overarching uses** of learning outcomes (SAQA Act and NQF Act)

- In the design features of the NQF: Aid transparency, comparability and equivalence mapping;
- To describe at the most strategic , generic systems level, a broader set of competences relevant to life and society in general (critical cross-field outcomes);
- Define to expected outcome of the learning process (standards and qualifications);
- In occupational qualifications, signal what learners must be able to do, and know in employment/work;
- In the design of curricula, and to guide teaching, learning and assessment (e.g. specific outcomes and assessment criteria);
- In all forms of assessment, - formative, summative and especially RPL;
- Guide decisions on CAT and articulation within and between institutions and Sub-frameworks; and
- International equivalence and comparability.

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Review 2001

In 2001 the two Ministers established a Task Team to review that "match between policy objectives and outcomes, experience and attitudes with the implementation of the NQF"

Findings:

- Recognition that the comprehensive approach was and remains unique; and the NQF is an essential instrument in the construction of a highly responsive South African education and training system;
- Challenges: Complexity; proliferation of bodies; unclear roles; organisational structure; mistrust; 'turf wars'; barriers to articulation and recognition of sectoral and unit standard-based quals;

Led to NQF Act, No. 67 of 2008.

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From SAQA Act to NQF Act

SAQA Act	NQF Act
Two Ministries: Doe and DoL	One Ministry: DHET (S&T), with overarching executive responsibility for NQF, SAQA, QCs.
Centralised standard setting, through SAQA-established NSBs/SGBs	Key shift: Devolved and differentiated approach for GENFET, HET, and T&O through three QCs
Centralised QA through SAQA-established ETQAs	Key shift: Three QCs conduct QA
8-level NQF	10-Level NQF
Representative SAQA Board of 36 members	12 members based on personal capacities
	Recognition of professional bodies; registration of professional designations

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Conceptualisation of learning outcomes in NQF Act, No. 67 of 2008

Apart from those listed earlier, the White Paper, 2013) emphasises **new focus** on elements to be included in the conceptualisation, writing and use of learning outcomes in the NQF Act context:

- Partnerships with other post-school institutions;
- Workplace training;
- Work-integrated learning (WIL);
- An integrated system with components which complement each other;
- Skills and knowledge to improve the performance of the economy, expand employment and equip people to achieve sustainable livelihoods; and
- Develop effective and well-understood vocational learning and occupational pathways and articulation.

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The Three QCs: QCTO

The QCTO

- Designed to *integrate knowledge, practical skills and workplace learning* into the curriculum;
- Work-integrated learning (simulation, work-directed theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and work-based learning) is a central component of occupational qualification design;
- The learning outcomes must reflect the education and training of adults who will contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of South African and participate successfully in the global economy and skilled society;
- Curricula are integral to the qualification design process.

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The Three QCs: Umalusi

Umalusi

- A qualification is defined as the broad specifications and combinations of subjects which must be achieved by learners;
- The qualification denotes that formal recognition, through certification, of learning achievement, and is awarded by an appropriate QA body and marks the achievement of the necessary learning stipulated in the qualification and curriculum;
- The quals. may be academic or vocational in nature;
- They prepare learners in *a broad, general way* for further learning and with some readiness to enter the world of work;
- They are discipline based and include foundational learning;
- Ultimately contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of South Africa; and
- Facilitate articulation between Sub-frameworks and internationally.

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The Three QCs: CHE

The CHE

- Recognises three broad qualification progression routes with permeable boundaries, i.e. vocational, professional, and general;
- A single but diverse and differentiated higher education system;
- A range of qualification types may be awarded to mark the achievement of learning outcomes that have been appropriately assessed;
- A programme is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification;
- All HE programmes and quals. must have a core component and may have a fundamental and/or elective component (purpose determines this);
- Nested approach: From generic to specific; WIL is also included in some qualifications;
- The appropriate route is derived from the purpose and outcomes of the qualification;
- General - strong orientation towards theoretical knowledge; and
- Professional route - epitomised by professional orientation.

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Challenges

- “NQFs are undoubtedly contestable artifacts of modern society” (Walters, 2015).
- “The prominence given to the learning outcomes approach is of a recent data, indicating that high aspirations are not always accompanied by systemic and successful implementation” (UNESCO &CEDEFOP, 2019).
- The failure of implementation could lie in expectations that education would lead to transformation without paying necessary attention to ***implementation and capacity***” (Chisholm &Leyendecker, 2008).
- Undoubtedly, significant resource challenges (Isaacs &Nkomo).

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Challenges

- Critics see the NQF as an ‘ambitious project’; ‘integration is complex and challenging; ‘separation of academic and vocational training fuels social class structuring’;
- knowledge has been neglected; Walters (2015) and Allais (2009) – ‘the madness of historic use of unit standards to ‘salami slice’ a curriculum”
- Poor design features of especially unit-standard based qualifications
- Mistrust; insufficient ‘relational agency’;
- Insufficient ‘common knowledge’ about key aspects of NQF development and implementation, learning outcomes, parity of esteem, etc.
- Dual centres of power which act disruptively within and outside of the NQF system (Allais, 2009)

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Successes

- A comprehensive and integrated NQF;
- Valid levels, level descriptors, which underpin learning outcomes;
- Use of learning outcomes and learning outcomes approach in qualification design;
- Excellent NLRD - Credibility and validity of reports; trends reports;
- Research output is globally recognised;
- Evaluation and comparability of foreign qualifications;
- MRQs;
- Internationalisation policy directives;
- Verification system;
- E-Certificate;
- Partnerships - regionally, continentally and globally;
- Ability to deal with fraudulent and misrepresented qualifications

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Mixed success/Contested areas

RPL:

Successful implementation for access; designations, (SASCOC); Promotion; Credit accumulation.

Contestation due to Insufficient 'common knowledge' and common understanding (relational agency)

Plethora of policies and interpretations - some non-aligned

RPL Reference Group??? Where to now?

Articulation:

Success: Minister's enabling policy

SAQA/DUT research with excellent empirical case studies

Challenges: Insufficient 'common knowledge/understanding

Mistrust - e.g. parity of esteem issue

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Next 20 years

Three areas are considered which will have an impact on how we define, write and use learning outcomes

- The future of work
- The Knowledge ‘project’
- The Fourth industrial Revolution

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The future of work (FoW)

Two main sources: ILO literature review (2018) comprising 255 individual studies; World economic Forum (2016) report;

No commonly accepted vision on the future of work;

No agreement on the key drivers of change that will influence future jobs;

The ILO defines the FoW along 5 dimensions.

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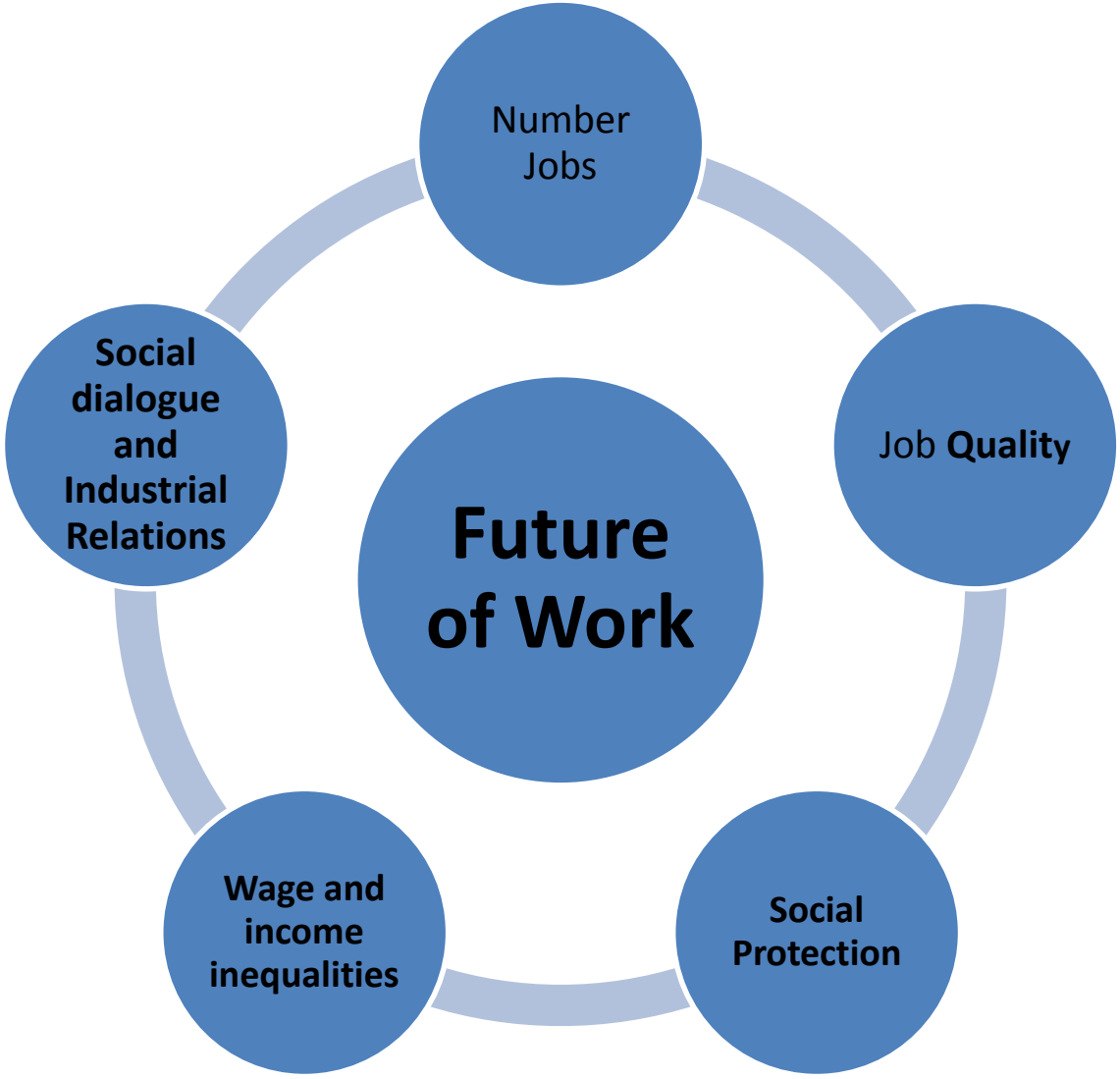
The future of work (FoW)



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The future of work

Potential job losses/destruction of jobs:

- A global increase in the share of older people - decline of the growth rate of potential labour force;
- Climate change and unstable geo-political places - will provoke increased migration;
- Challenge to create jobs is substantial - 500 million new jobs by 2020;
- Job destruction most likely in low and middle-skilled (white collar) administrative and routine jobs;
- Susceptible sectors are manufacturing, electrical appliances; textile, clothing and footwear and financial sector where block chain technology could have far reaching effects.

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The future of work

Potential job creation opportunities:

- New technologies to create new jobs;
- The change in the production mix for humans to be substituted by machines must be more profitable;
- Luschka (2015) Russian study - potential job creation outweighs jobs destruction;
- BC - Developers, internet of things architects, cognitive computer engineers;
- Occupations such as architecture, engineering, computer, mathematics, additive manufacturing such as 3D printing materials development, energy auditors, climate change analysts, fuel cell technicians, health occupations, maintenance and cleaning;
- Cross-professional skills - mechatronics, geo-political studies, bio-technology, communication .

Requirements: Soft skills; teamwork; skills development; CPD; systems thinking; ; effective policy responses. (**Critical cross-field outcomes)**

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The knowledge project

- **Kline**: Time to Think (1999): Everything we do depends on its quality on the thinking we do first; the need to think anew and ask incisive questions";
- **Allais** (2009) " the neglect of knowledge";
- **Walters** (2012) "lifelong learning is intimately related to NQFs; NQFs require communication, collaboration, coordination across diverse parts of society"
- **Roseveare** (2010) " need mechanisms to improve lifelong learning";
- **Allais** (2009): 'Learning outcomes statements would increase provision and that organising all qualifications on a hierarchy of levels would lead to valuing all types of learning equally";
- This has not happened as envisaged - effecting RPL, articulation CAT, learning modes etc.
- **Whitty** (2016) ; Returning to Bernstein's work - introduce access to high status knowledge, but get there by different means"
- **Walters** (2015): SA Scholars are engaging actively again with learning and knowledge debates
- **CEDEFOP** (2019): Need a common understanding of what learning outcomes are and how to define, write and apply' them

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The knowledge project

- **Fenwick** (2013): What knowledge counts? What sort of knowledge? And where is knowledge created? What is the nature of knowledge? Learning what? Learning, because why?
- **Drucker** (2003): The knowledge that matters is subject to rapid and abrupt shifts" (CPD; digital OE etc.)
- **Engeström** (2018): Who is learning? Why? How do they learn
- **Merriam** (2018) Holistic learning
- **Illeris and Evetts** (2018): Learning covers all processes that lead to relatively lasting changes of capacity - motor, cognitive, psychodynamic, or social
- **Sfar**d (1998): Acquisition and participation metaphors;
- **Fuller and Unwin** (2015): contemporary apprenticeships - vertical progression to HE; horizontal progression between jobs and sectors; and continue to study general education subjects. Broaden the content of apprenticeships .

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The fourth industrial revolution

- A seismic shift in attention to all forms of teaching, learning, assessment and awards driven by:
- MOOCS; Collaborative education and training, open education resources, changing nature of work and the future of work.
- Penprase (2018): strategically utilise the 'internet of things' to prepare the coming workforce for the challenges of things.
- Nano-materials; bio-technologies, computer power.
- WEF: Tipping points identified - will be widespread and create societal change. Our task - to respond in education and training through re-imagined learning outcomes and curricula; just in time education (CPD); 'Global identity (BC); Flipped classrooms; leveraging the expertise of teachers and specialists through digital classroom practices; scalability of provision; live streaming; short courses/micro-credentialing.
- internationalisation

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Conclusion

The essential nature of the NQF is that of a social construct, in that we as social actors in society not only theorise about, construct and implement it, but we also actively change or work against it.

Three criteria: democratic participation, intellectual scrutiny. Adequate resourcing" (Isaacs & Nkomo, 2012).

A future design of learning outcomes should include:

- Ethical thinking
- Intercultural awareness
- Critical thinking
- Critical cross-field outcomes
- Principle-centred leadership (relational agency)