

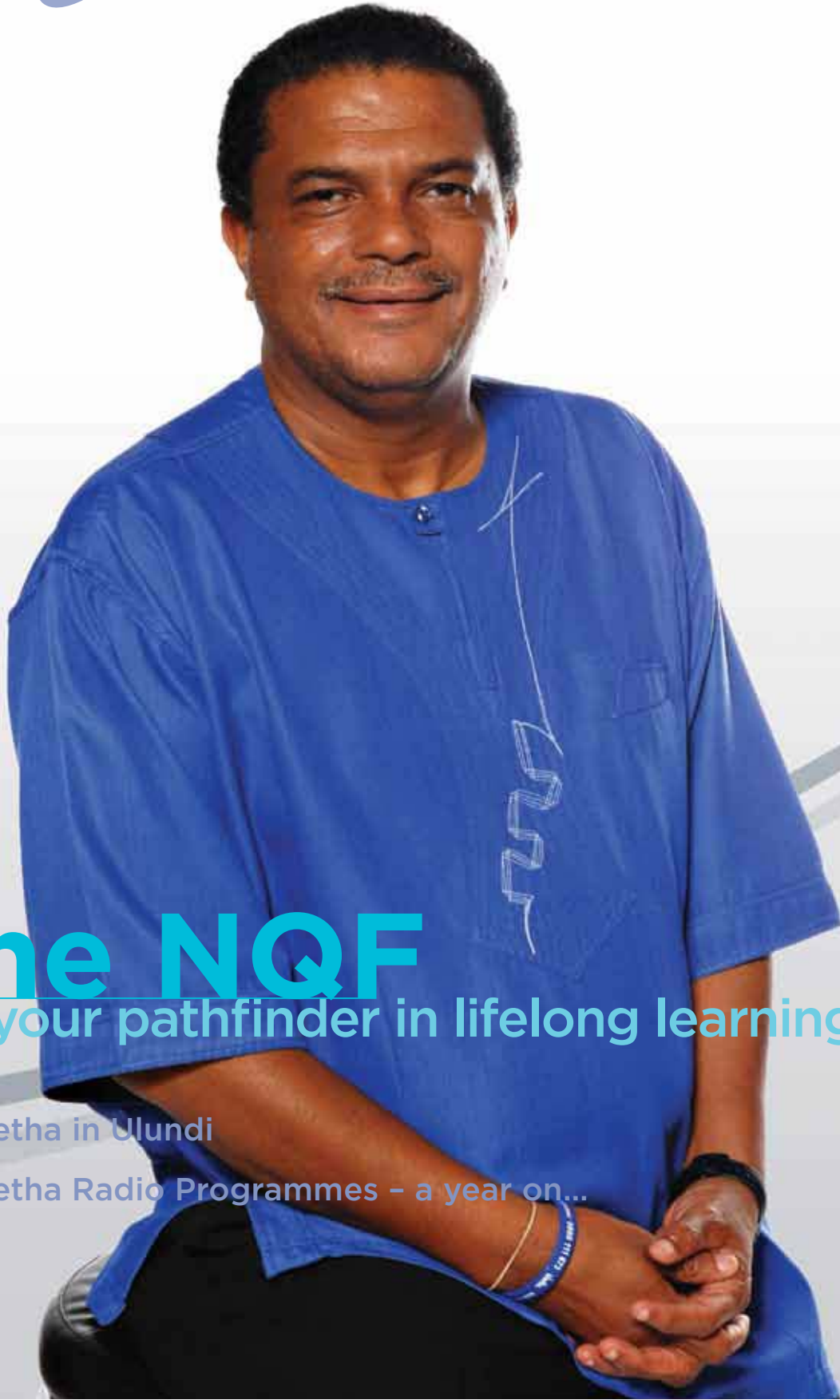
Vol.14 No.1 May 2012



SAQA

# update

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY



## The NQF

- your pathfinder in lifelong learning

Khetha in Ulundi

Khetha Radio Programmes - a year on...

# Invest in the global currency of success – quality education and training

Education and training is an investment in yourself. A quality qualification that enjoys global recognition is the only capital you need to build a successful career in South Africa or abroad.

That's why you have to insist on a NQF-registered qualification. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) oversees the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) – a set of principles and guidelines that assists in the creation of a qualifications system for South Africa.

In turn, the NQF ensures that you have access to reputable education and training establishments that provide you with qualifications that are recognised locally and internationally.

Finance your future with the currency that will always add value to your life – a NQF-registered qualification.



*"The SAQA stamp of approval gives me the assurance that my education enjoys international recognition and my future knows no boundaries."*

*Ivan Moodley  
Bachelor of Science in Engineering B. Sc (Eng)*



# SAQA update

## EDITORIAL BOARD

John Arnesen  
Ntsiki Gumbe  
Lucas Malambe  
Ernst Vorster

## SUB-EDITORS

AllyCats PR

## LAYOUT AND PRINTING

Kashan Advertising  
advertising@kashan.co.za

## DISCLAIMER

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).



# Contents

**4** From the CEO's desk

## SAQA IN THE NEWS

**6** SAQA's 2012 Gala Dinner and Stakeholder Engagement Function

**8** Khetha in Ulundi

**10** SAQA drives RPL strategy to promote access and mobility in the NQF

**12** Finding ways to better the NQF and Career Advice Helpline

**13** For the love of life-long learning: New Leaders for Learning course offered

**14** Khetha Radio Programmes – a year on...

## SAQA DIRECTORATE OVERVIEW

**16** The NQF – your pathfinder in lifelong learning

**17** Data to guide the nation

**19** Making a village of the global workplace

**20** Career advice for a brighter tomorrow

**22** The bigger picture through global relations

**24** NQF Level Descriptors Roadshow a huge success

**26** SAQA publications



**Joe Samuels**  
CEO

# From the CEO's desk

learning impacts positively on these children, who through a myriad of circumstances, have dropped out of school?

The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, has consistently highlighted the plight of the 'neet' youth (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and how the post-school system will provide for them.

These challenges are being addressed through the conceptualisation and implementation of the post-schooling system that is now being discussed intensely with the release of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training, currently in the public comment phase.

SAQA, as a key stakeholder, needs to continue its work and must debate, influence and give input into this important process towards the formulation of government policy and its future expression in a White Paper.

Mr Dennis Gunning, who worked for 40 years in public education service in Scotland, England, Australia and Wales and who in February wrote the foreword in a special SAQA Bulletin produced to pay tribute to outgoing CEO Mr Samuel Isaacs, gives a useful understanding of the South African NQF. He describes it as a roadmap for the development of a new system of education and training, fit for a new democracy.

He adds that a comprehensive

NQF, which we are fortunate to have in South Africa, contributes to democratisation of education because it does not privilege one style of learning over another, nor does it privilege one type of learning provider over another.

The South African NQF supports equity and access by giving recognition to learners' knowledge and skills wherever and however these are developed, and by encouraging individuals and organisations to plan learning pathways for the future.

That said, we must not be complacent. In the next five years, SAQA and the Quality Councils must actively engage in building an NQF that is a roadmap for learners and ensures seamless articulation between the various sub-frameworks. This means that learners must be able to move horizontally, diagonally and vertically within the post-school system.

For this level of articulation to be successful, a new vision and commitment is needed. The new SAQA leadership is committed to tackling a range of issues associated with articulation, so that learners throughout the country can progress through the education and training system.

## **SERVING THE LEARNERS**

In line with the democratisation of learning, workers for many years have been asking for a properly implemented Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system. SAQA needs to commit itself to seeing

**E**ducation is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.

These words by former President Nelson Mandela are close to my heart, and at the centre of the government's vision of a strong and successful nation.

Education and training are a priority of government and if we want to continue improving our country, their standing as issues of national importance must not be diminished. To that end, SAQA must continue to change the lives of South Africa's learners for the better by helping the nation embrace our National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

In his recent State of the Nation Address, President Zuma mentioned his concern that the *General Household Survey of 2010* indicated that just over 120 000 children between the ages of 7 and 15 are out of school. The question must be asked: How can SAQA assist in ensuring that lifelong

RPL becoming a central feature of education, training and lifelong learning. We sorely need to put in place a national RPL strategy and system, driven by a national co-ordinating agency.

SAQA is committed to supporting Minister Nzimande in making RPL a national reality over the next five years.

#### **CAREER ADVICE IS ALL-IMPORTANT**

The linking of an NQF and career advice is a brilliant innovation in the South African context. Tony Watts, a leading career advice expert, believes that this is an area in which South Africa and SAQA could provide valuable lessons to the rest of the world.

Again, the leadership of SAQA is unequivocally committed to building the NQF and career advice relationship over the next five years. Providing learners with the correct information needed to make informed choices about learning is crucial.

The NQF should become part of every learner's language of learning. In order for this to happen, it should include a wider stakeholder community, namely the learners, teachers and employers, because they must experience the benefits of the NQF.

Our NQF is not a building that remains standing after it has been vacated by its inhabitants. It lives and breathes because it serves the people. Learners – including workers – have to see the level and credit value of their achievements

as equal in value to the money in their pockets. They must understand that the NQF supports their ambitions of progressing into employment and further learning. And government needs to see the benefit of the NQF as a cornerstone of an education, training and lifelong learning system that will lead to vibrant national and local economies, strong and sustainable communities, and skilled, educated and fulfilled people.

SAQA's main priority is therefore to serve the interests of its learners, and to ensure their satisfaction. SAQA primarily exists to ensure there is a world-class, articulated, quality learning system that works for all.

#### **PAST AND FUTURE**

It is clear that the new SAQA leadership has many challenges to meet and we look forward to working with the SAQA Board in this new era. As we begin to knuckle down, I am once again inspired by a quote by Mandela which captures the challenges I face as new CEO: 'I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended'.

My work too has just begun.

As the incoming CEO, I wish to express my appreciation for the confidence that has been placed in me. I know that a considerable

amount of humility is needed to listen to and learn from all those around me. I know that power does not reside in coercion, control and domination but in inviting participation, collaboration and communication. I believe that 'everyone can be great because everyone can serve'.

Many of the inner resources I will draw on as I lead SAQA into this next chapter have been gained from my predecessor. This is the perfect time to quote Isaac Newton. He said, 'If I have seen farther than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulders of giants'. Over the past 15 years, the SAQA team has stood on the shoulders of giants in the form of Samuel Isaacs and the SAQA Board Members, past and present. It is because of these giants in our midst that we have managed to achieve so much.

As we say goodbye to our chief executive officer, we recommit ourselves to continuing the ethos of selflessness and hard work which has characterised SAQA.

I will remember Sam as a 'Pastoral Social Artist' – a worker priest who took his role as shepherd of his flock to a high point, by leading SAQA in a caring, people-centred manner.

I trust I will show similar qualities as I join hands with the SAQA team, Board and stakeholders in our quest to solidify the NQF as a South African treasure.

**Joe Samuels**  
**SAQA CEO**



## SAQA's 2012 Gala Dinner and Stakeholder Engagement Function

*By Ernst Vorster, Assistant Director: Communications*

It was an evening to remember. An evening signalling great change in the history of SAQA and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as guests said farewell to Mr Samuel Isaacs and welcomed Mr Joe Samuels as SAQA's incoming CEO. SAQA's 2012 Gala Dinner and Stakeholder Engagement Function was held at

the Sheraton Hotel on 15 February 2012.

The purpose of the evening was to reflect on the many achievements and accomplishments SAQA has fought so hard for over the span of its 15-year existence and to set the stage for SAQA's strategic imperatives over the next few years.

As guests were arriving, the media were already gathered to interview Samuels and Isaacs, as well as Mr JJ Njeke, Chairperson of the 5<sup>th</sup> SAQA Board. Director of NQF Advocacy Mr John Arnesen led the media briefing with a polite but firm hand. The three honoured guest were presented with a question each to break the ice and the media engaged them on a multitude of issues concerning SAQA's operations. SABC Radio requested a brief interview after the briefing, and kept the function organisers on their toes as they feared that proceedings would

start late. Thankfully, organisers managed to get Samuels back into the dining hall, just in time for the festivities to start.

Dressed to the nines, SAQA's honoured guests were welcomed with great hospitality. Many of them had a hand in the measures of success that the organisation has achieved. Of course, unbeknownst to them, SAQA staff had been scurrying until moments before the function commenced to perfect the detail of every part of the evening.

While guests were taking their seats, the proceedings kicked off with the SAQA Video, which had been completed just in time to 'premiere' at the event. Staff and stakeholders alike will see more of the video as opportunity allows over the coming months. The Programme Director, Ms Ntsiki Gumbe, welcomed all present and introduced the guests of honour, as well as key speakers who paid



▲ John Arnesen, Director: NQF Advocacy, addressing the media

tribute to Isaacs. As the evening progressed, guests were wined and dined, and charmed by the melodies of renowned guitarist Tessa Ziegler.

Speeches commenced with vigour and the Director General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Gwebs Qonde, opened the floor with a thoughtful account of how both Samuels and Isaacs' contributions have and will shape SAQA in the future. This was followed by Njeke, Samuels and Isaacs with their respective repertoires.

As SAQA's incoming CEO, Samuels highlighted the areas of specific growth that SAQA will be focusing on during the next five years. He insisted that SAQA and the Quality Councils must actively engage in building an NQF that is learner-centred and ensures seamless articulation between the various sub-frameworks. The concept of articulation implies that learners must be able to move horizontally, diagonally and vertically within the post-school system. Further developments in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) practices will be another priority for SAQA, which has undertaken the initiative to advise the Minister of Higher Education and Training to create a task team that will drive the potential of RPL in South Africa.

Samuels also paid tribute to the outgoing CEO and past and present Board Members by quoting Isaac Newton. He said, 'If I have seen farther than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulders of giants'.

Part and parcel of any stakeholder engagement function is, of course, the opportunity to network and build on good relationships. The 'who's who'

of Education, Training and Development in South Africa mingled, exchanged thoughts and business cards, and aligned their causes where possible. No doubt, valuable working relationships were forged in the spirit of the evening.

Ensuring that a great occasion was made extra memorable, guests were sent home with gift bags containing special copies of the SAQA Bulletin Volume 12 no. 2 which highlights key readings on the NQF and other SAQA Publications such as the NQF Implementation Framework and the SAQA Brochure. These publications are available on the SAQA Website. The Bulletin contains the most complete collection of NQF-related articles and proved very popular with the stakeholders present.

SAQA extends its gratitude to everyone who contributed towards the successful execution of the function, and indeed, the guests who made the evening so unforgettable. [🔗](#)



▲ Joe Samuels (left) and Samuel Isaacs (right) sharing a laugh with Firoz Patel, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training

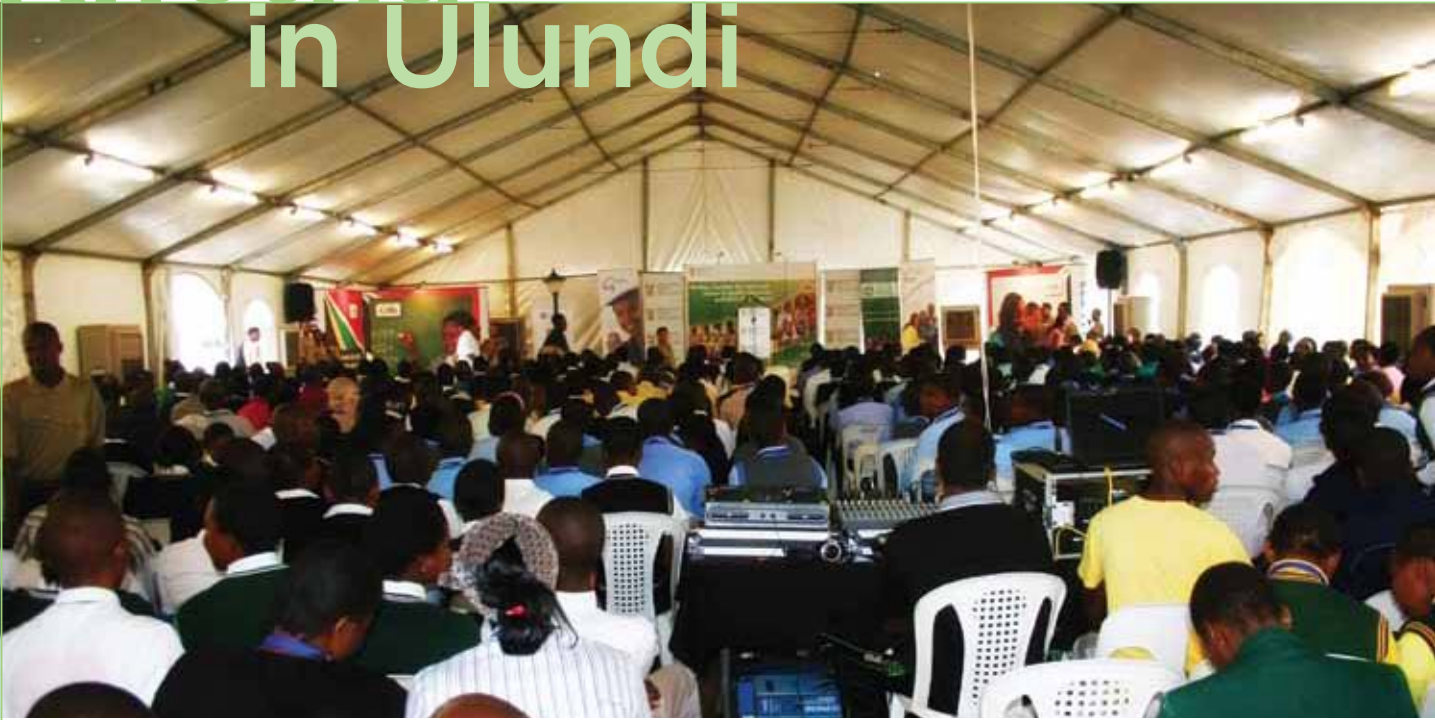
Gwebs Qonde, Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, honouring Samuel Isaacs



▲ Samuel Isaacs with guests at the function

# Khetha in Ulundi

*By Lucas Malambe, Deputy  
Director: Communications*



**F**or a day, speakers and career exhibitors enthralled learners with their insight into post-school options, learning and knowledge environments, as well as the world of work. More than 1 500 learners from 114 schools participated in the Education Indaba held in the Zululand District on 18 February 2012.

Learners from the Mahlabathini

and Nongoma areas braved the wet weather to learn more about career paths, post-school funding and making the right choice. The Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training Professor Hlengiwe Mkhize delivered the keynote speech for the event. Reminding the learners and teachers that great leaders come from the Ulundi area, Mkhize

thanked the learners for taking this important decision to be part of the Education Indaba and thus taking the first step to choose a career path.

“You should certainly be proud to be part of such a rich history and heritage,” she said.

Aptly themed Community Outreach on Career Options and Post-School Opportunities for the



▲ SAQA Career Advisors sharing knowledge with some of the learners



▲ Dignitaries, from left: Ntsiki Gumbe, SAQA Director: Strategic Support Unit; Samuel Isaacs, Former SAQA CEO; Prof. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training; and Firoz Patel, Deputy Director-General, Department of Higher Education and Training



Youth, the event was designed to offer career advice to the disadvantaged communities. “We chose to come here because you are learning from schools and families which are facing too many challenges. For example, while other learners from urban areas run after Ministers and Deputy Ministers daily, in your case, access to the leadership is not a given,” she said.

Unveiling Khetha to the learners, Mkhize told them that the educational campaign was a call to action designed to assist learners without the necessary support to make the right career move. She urged learners to tune in to the Khetha radio educational programmes and call the helpline to be helped to make the right career move.

“There are always people who are ready to assist you,” she added. Mr Samuel Isaacs, SAQA’s outgoing CEO, called out the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Career Advice Services helpline 0860 111 673, and the learners chorused after him. Isaacs explained to the learners that they

must not allow their situation to deter them. “Use this number,” he said.

Demonstrating unity and support for the Ulundi youth, Isaacs and Mkhize shared the stage with Members of the Royal House Prince Muntukaphiwana Zulu, Prince Zebulun Zulu and Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party. Dignitaries included a Member of the Executive Council for Education in KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Senzo Mchunu, MPP; Members of the Portfolio Committee on Education and Training; a representative of the District Mayor of the Zululand District Municipality; as well as senior government officials and various Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

In between the speeches, the learners were treated to melodious music from a local choir and a choir from one of the schools. Poetry was provided by the learners.

“We’ve been waiting for this important event since making a request to the ministry last year,” Buthelezi told the gathering.



▲ Gumbe and Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi: Member of Parliament, at the SAQA career advice centre

All the speakers from various formations motivated the learners, reminding them of the importance of education in improving their lives, families and communities. Despite the light rain, the learners were in high spirits and took turns at the temporary career advice centre. SETAs, universities, National Student Financial Aid Scheme of SA, Further Education and Training colleges, and SAQA counselled the curious learners on a range of vital issues pertinent to career pathways. 🔄

▼ The future leaders of Ulundi



▼ Prof. Mkhize is moved as she listens to a poem about making the right choice from one of the learners



Khetha is designed to support every South African to make an informed choice regarding their next career move. Although Khetha also services school leavers, mature students, parents, teachers and professionals, it is critical that learners and teachers in rural areas are exposed to this service for continuous career support. Khetha also offers an SMS and please-call-me service that a learner can use to be contacted by an advisor from SAQA.

The NQF and Career Advice Helpline can be contacted as follows:

Email: [help@careerhelp.org.za](mailto:help@careerhelp.org.za) | Phone: 0860 111 673 | SMS: 072 204 5056 | Website: [www.careerhelp.org.za](http://www.careerhelp.org.za)

# SAQA drives RPL strategy to promote access and mobility in the NQF

*By Ernst Vorster, Assistant Director: Communications*

**S**AQA has, through its 15 years of existence, committed itself to the redress of past inequalities and the development of mechanisms that will guide South Africans seamlessly through education and training in order to build a better future. Along with the Quality Councils, SAQA is actively engaged in building a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that is learner-centred and ensures seamless articulation between the various sub-frameworks.

Articulation implies that learners must be able to move horizontally, diagonally and vertically within the post-school system, without resistance. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has the potential to address many of the challenges faced by South Africans in the country today. It is meant to be a mechanism for recognising skills and knowledge traditionally ignored or undervalued. RPL potentially facilitates access to and

articulation between, educational offerings so that individuals can move through the education and training system more easily than would otherwise be the case.

The NQF Act 67 of 2008 and the Acts associated with the three Quality Councils (RSA 2008a, b, c, d) was the culmination of years of work by SAQA and other education and training stakeholders and ushered in an NQF for South Africa that has since won global recognition. The original NQF objectives of integration, access, mobility and progression, quality and redress remain, but RPL is key for the achievement of these objectives and for the realisation of meaningful lifelong learning.

As a vital part of lifelong learning, RPL can be very effective in enabling adult learners to access higher education and vocational qualifications.

The principles of RPL involve recognition, in various forms and degrees, of non-formal and

informal learning that learners of all ages may have acquired in the course of their working lives or participation in community activities outside formal places of learning.

## **SAQA WISHES TO EMPLOY RPL IN DIFFERING DEGREES:**

Workers could for instance have acquired skills in the workplace and have few or no formal qualifications and thus be barred from certain career pathways. Implementing a system that would allow for these individuals to go through a process of assessment, as applicable per industry or sector, and preparation for evaluation at the end of which this experience is recognised with an appropriate certificate or credit, will aim to address this issue.

A second example is when learners seek access to college, undergraduate or postgraduate study when they have not met all the entrance criteria of the

The RPL Reference Group gathering at SAQA House





▲ Members of the RPL Reference Group fully engaged

institution of learning they wish to enter. In many cases, learners may again go through a process of preparation (sometimes referred to as 'portfolio development') towards assessment of their readiness to enter these courses of study.

Another example includes workers already doing certain jobs and holding positions for which they have qualifications other than those currently recognised for the work they are doing. To comply with new national and internationally comparable laws and criteria, these individuals may need to acquire new legal certification. There are RPL preparation and assessment processes towards this type of certification, and SAQA wishes to expand on the existing processes available to South Africans.

South Africans must recognise that RPL is not simply an assessment process – it involves mediation from one type of knowledge and skill to another. Effective RPL processes – whether for access, for credit or for recognition in the workplace for white or blue-collar workers – usually involve making sure that RPL candidates have the mediation tools required for successful transitions of this type and kind.

Limited RPL practices have existed in South Africa for some time now. Many public and private institutions of all kinds have RPL policies. Implementation of these policies has not always been easy or straight-forward, however. In a

recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) proceeding, a pertinent comment was made:

“South Africa has not yet gone beyond the initial stage represented by inspirational promoters of recognition, even though it has a network of excellent specialists and exhibits scattered signs of very good practice.” (OECD 2009: 68)

SAQA was encouraged by the fact that these islands of good practice exist but believed that these developments must be taken further. The rich descriptions of RPL initiatives in the February 2011 SAQA publication, *National RPL Conference: bridging and expanding existing islands of excellent practice – abstracts and summaries*, and the January 2011 SAQA publication, *RPL Resolution and Working Document*, prove SAQA has committed itself to developing RPL to its full potential in South Africa. These publications are available on the SAQA website ([www.saqqa.org.za](http://www.saqqa.org.za)).

SAQA is also in the process of compiling a book of full papers from the National RPL Conference 2011 and documenting case studies of successful RPL in further and higher education and training, as well as in workplace contexts for blue and white-collar workers. These publications will be work-shopped with a view to creating and further

disseminating RPL models and 'toolkits' customised for differing sectors and areas of learning.

In order to champion the development of RPL in South Africa, SAQA advised the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, to appoint a national RPL task team. The Minister accepted the advice and the new CEO Mr Joe Samuels represents SAQA on the task team that was established in January 2012.

SAQA also established an RPL Reference Group which is providing SAQA with expert advice regarding the development of RPL policy and related matters. Following the Reference Group's first meeting on 30 January, a concept paper on lifelong learning, RPL and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) has been developed and is in the process of being refined. Two more meetings are scheduled, for April and June 2012.

With support from the RPL Reference Group, a policy on Assessment, RPL and CAT will be developed between February and August 2012. A writing team has been set up and the first draft of the policy is nearing completion.

These individuals will be responsible for bringing together SAQA's diverse RPL activities, providing assistance with the resolution of career advice queries relating to RPL, and working closely with the consortium that will conduct a feasibility study to establish a co-ordinating mechanism for RPL in South Africa. Appointments will be finalised soon.

These activities describe the dedication with which SAQA has endeavoured to support RPL as a mechanism for improved access and mobility within education and training in South Africa. Committed to this huge undertaking, SAQA will draw on its experience in developing and implementing the NQF, a global model of excellence, and see to it that RPL will follow the same route. [G](#)

# Finding ways to better the NQF and Career Advice Helpline

*By Tumelo Modisane, Assistant Director: Communications*

A study trip to Leicester in the UK has left SAQA staff members brimming with fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

SAQA officials and representatives of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Ministry recently went on a capacity-building trip to the UK, visiting bss, a non-profit organisation operating a multi-channel career helpline in Leicester and Manchester.

The purpose of the trip was to explore ways of improving the service that the NQF and Career Advice Helpline offers and also to find ways of bettering the technological systems the Helpline currently uses. This was not the first time SAQA officials have visited bss; they first visited the organisation before setting up the Helpline in 2010.

bss has managed the UK careers helpline since 1998, first under the brand *learnirect* and now *Next Step*. The helpline is

open from 8am to 10pm and is staffed by over 200 dedicated and well-trained career helpline advisors, who work in shifts.

“The UK study tour was incredibly informative. We managed to see how all their daily operations were based on quality. The systems that they have in place, from their Information Systems to their Management Systems, all support the simple re-occurring theme of providing a quality service to the public. Although we are still in our infancy phase, it was encouraging to see that we are in fact heading in the right direction,” notes Mr Jordan Bierman, an NQF and Career Advice Helpline Advisor at CAS, when reflecting on the study tour.

Fellow advisor Mr Reuel MacPherson says, “The study tour to Leicester provided a glimpse into the trends that career advice as an organic entity can evolve into, taking into consideration the first world status of the United

Kingdom. This glimpse into the future was very beneficial for me at CAS as I can use what I have witnessed and observed and retrospectively plot the progress of our own career advice services practices of where we could go and what we could become, not forgetting to accommodate the African context into our own scenario.”

The delegation also noted that customer satisfaction is at the heart of work done by bss. Other lessons learnt from bss are:

- Focused recruitment and extensive induction ensures that new staff members are introduced to all information and systems they need to succeed in their work.
- There is a two-tier system, namely frontline level where advisors listen to and capture queries of clients, and the career coaches who help clients resolve their queries.



▲ Members of the Study Tour, from left Paul West, SAQA Director: Career Advice Services; Letshego Mokeki, SAQA Manager: Career Advice Services FET Intermediaries; Joe Samuels, SAQA CEO; Nqaba Nqandela, Chief of Staff for Minister of Higher Education and Training - Blade Nzimande; and Ntsiki Gumbe, SAQA Director: Strategic Support Unit



▲ Oliver Crouch, Assistant Director: UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills flanked by SAQA's Samuel Isaacs and Joe Samuels

# For the love of lifelong learning:

## New Leaders for Learning course offered

This ensures that there are dedicated people for each of the areas of responsibility, and makes space for specialisation in what the advisors do.

- A culture of excellence, learning and accountability at all levels of the organisation has been developed and this is supported by structures and systems that work as they should.
- To maintain high levels of excellence, investment should be made in training and development of staff.
- Information Technology and Information Systems that are fully functional and excellent are at the heart of the multi-channel career advice helpline.

Ellen Modibane, NQF and Career Advisor at CAS, said “Overall it was a great experience, very applicable to CAS and we as South Africans may need to tailor it within our context and gradually build on that.”

While fellow NQF and Career Advice Helpline Advisor Yvonne Mathole said this of the experience: “We are blessed that we have bss as our model and hopefully it will not take us long to achieve what they have achieved. It has been confirmed that it is crucial to provide impartial quality service at all levels, because the information we distribute should build a progressive South Africa. Our service should help people write stories with happy endings, stories full of optimism.” [🔗](#)

#### Sources

<https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/aboutus/Pages/default.aspx>

Report from SAQA team

**S**AQA is excited to be partnering with the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in presenting a Lifelong Learning and National Qualifications Frameworks: Leaders for Learning course.

So committed is SAQA to this continuing education course that eight of its own staff members have enrolled and began work early in March. The nine-month course caters for around 25 participants only, to maximise personal attention, and is also intended for international learners. The first intake includes participants from Namibia, South Africa, Australia, and Zambia.

“This course presents an opportunity for policy-makers and other stakeholders to get a deeper understanding of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and fosters an exchange of knowledge,” says Dr James Keevy, SAQA’s International Liaison Director.

SAQA’s former Chief Executive Officer Mr Samuel Isaacs, who retired early this year, remains passionate about developing lifelong learning, and has been appointed Honorary Professor at UWC. He will be co-ordinating the course together with Professor Shirley Walters of UWC, herself a former SAQA chairperson.

Lifelong learning is the underlying conceptual framework wherein the work of SAQA takes place, including the development and implementation of the NQF. Within this framework it is acknowledged that everyone can learn regardless

of age, gender or position in society. Learning can take place in formal or non-formal contexts.

SAQA believes that the course will help develop ‘leaders for learning’ by providing a thorough understanding of the concept of lifelong learning and qualifications frameworks to middle and senior managers who are directly or indirectly involved in the development of the NQF.

There are over 130 NQFs in various stages of development internationally and South Africa, through SAQA, established one of the first generation NQFs, so its involvement with UWC in this initiative is fitting.

The course will include both face-to-face and eLearning components.

It is hoped that the course will facilitate the further development of an international community of practitioners and scholars who are involved in the promotion and implementation of lifelong learning and NQFs, as researchers, managers, activist-scholars or administrators.

The intention of UWC is for this continuing education course to eventually be developed into a full qualification.

People keen on doing the 2013 course should be interested in thinking deeply about the history, development, management and implementation of NQFs and lifelong learning in the promotion of a ‘learning society’, and should have an undergraduate degree or equivalent. [🔗](#)



# Khetha Radio Programmes – a year on...

*By Lucas Malambe, Deputy Director: Communications*

**R**ecognising the right of learners to make informed choices about their career pathways, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, together with SAQA, launched a career guidance radio campaign in 2011 to boost the unparalleled multi-channel Career Advice Services Helpline.

A year later, the enlightening Khetha Radio Programmes have grown in leaps and bounds. This achievement is extra special, given the over 2.3 million audience members the educational slots now attract each week. This number is set to increase even further this year with the addition of one more radio station – Radio Sonder Grense, which broadcasts in Afrikaans. Khetha was initially broadcast on nine SABC radio stations in nine official languages.

“We want to take the message on qualifications and career choices to learners all over the country, in their own home languages,” said Ntsiki Gumbe, SAQA’s Strategic Support Unit Director. She added “As the radio programmes were going into the second phase, we thought it wise to include all South African languages to add to our reach,”

Sustainable career development is a necessity if the country wishes to fulfil its mandate of making education accessible to previously disadvantaged and economically marginalised South Africans.

“Through Khetha, learners can access career advice and information through radio and the Helpline in the language of their choice. Khetha is created to help you in every way,” Nzimande

told scores of learners when he unveiled the Khetha brand during last year’s Mandela Day Career Festival held at Lusikisiki.

Heeding the Minister’s call, Khetha is designed to benefit those in far-flung areas of the country. Khetha also provides much-needed support to learners with little or no access to career advice and information to assist them to make informed decisions about their learning pathways and career goals. Radio is a popular medium in the deep rural areas and urban informal settlements. Even though Khetha services learners and mature students, it is critical that parents and teachers in rural areas are exposed to this service in their own language for continuous support. That Khetha has widespread penetration was confirmed by a SAQA-funded Quest Research Services (QRS) study that found Khetha is also popular in the poorer townships.

Khetha features industry experts and skilled workers that give listeners all the information they will need to plan for their future, including choice of subjects in Grade Nine, career choices and qualifications. There is also information on finding funding for your studies.

“I think Khetha programmes help if you are studying and you know that your mother won’t be able to afford to pay for your tuition. You can then apply for a bursary and when you study, you study harder so that your marks can speak for themselves and then you get the bursary you want,” said a Ligwalagwala listener in

one of the focus groups in Ermelo, Mpumalanga.

Khetha’s approach is different from the old traditional elitist model of career guidance that was inclined to preach only about the ‘right’ career paths to follow. Khetha believes in empowering the learner by showing that there are many options out there. Believing in lifelong learning, SAQA ensures that the adult learner and youth not in education, employment or training are also catered for.

The radio campaign replaces the old notion of a career choice as a single event, with the idea that people construct their own lives, making transitions throughout their lifetime. For instance, topics look beyond just assisting learners to pass their exams and choose the right subjects. Themes for the second phase of the radio project include job hunting, surviving higher learning institutions, entrepreneurship and learnerships. The second phase began in March 2012 and will go on for 48 weeks.

Nzimande, his deputy Professor Hlengiwe Mkhize, professional bodies as well as SETAs shared their experiences with learners during the first phase of the programme. Mkhize, talking to learners through the programme, encouraged young women to enter male-dominated occupations. Nzimande urged learners to consider Further Education and Training Colleges as one of the available post-school options. SETAs and professional bodies spoke to the unemployed about learnerships, internships and apprenticeships.



On the back of the theme – Make the Right Choice. Decide your Future – Khetha is designed to support every South African to make an informed choice regarding their next career move, thus meeting the mandate SAQA had set to achieve when a career advice radio campaign was still a dream.

In February 2010, SAQA and Ikwewezi FM, an Ndebele SABC radio station, started the pilot project that ran for a period of three months, during which SAQA sponsored two education programmes a week. It saw the beginning of a relationship between SAQA, the Department of Higher Education and Training and the SABC that would lead to the birth of Khetha, fulfilling a mandate that is shared by the three organisations – educating and informing the public.

“In 2010, the vision was to enable all individuals to value, have access to, and succeed in quality lifelong education and training as signified by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF),” says Gumbe.

Today, Khetha still introduces learners to the NQF and the principles of quality-assured education, focusing on articulation, Recognition of Prior Learning and career advice. For example,

through Khetha, learners are educated at an earlier age to identify bogus qualifications and fly-by-night institutions. This is important because there have been many cases where learners registered at institutions that were not legitimate or, even if they were, the qualifications they offered were not NQF-accredited. Learners realise later, after they have spent a lot of time and money studying, that it was all a waste because their qualifications cannot be recognised.

The format of the radio campaign is still phone-in programmes in which guests introduce a topic and the listeners are then given an opportunity to ask questions. The listeners’ responses are good and generally positive, with participants asking relevant questions that further enrich the programmes and generate content for future programmes. [↪](#)

#### EXCERPTS FROM THE RADIO CAMPAIGN RESEARCH BY QRS:

*“I like to listen to the educational programmes, because they encourage us as students and sometimes they give us the chance to talk on radio, especially about things like the environment so we get to warn people that they have to preserve and save water and also warn them about the dangers of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. When we get the chance to speak, we gain public speaking skills and are able to address the public”*

– Umhlobo Wenene listener (Motherwell, Port Elizabeth)

*“I listen to the radio the whole month; I do not switch it off”*

– Lesedi FM listener (Klerksdorp, North West)

*“I feel like it’s talking to me, because it’s been a long time since I left school and now it makes me want to go back to school. It pains me that back then there were no such opportunities and now I don’t have the energy anymore”*

– Ukhozi FM listener (KwaZulu-Natal)



# The NQF

## – your pathfinder in lifelong learning

The NQF Advocacy Project is determined to see all South Africans fluent in the language of the country's National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

While recent independent research shows a 15% awareness level of the NQF nationally, including those people living in isolated and rural areas, Project Director Mr John Arnesen says that the goal is to achieve 100% awareness within the next five years.

"While we believe that we have made considerable progress, by 2017 every South African, be they policy-maker or learner, must understand the NQF and its value," says Arnesen.

When first conceived, given the statutory mandate to inform the public about the qualifications framework, the NQF Advocacy Project focused on the wider public.

"In 2009, when we started on our advocacy journey, we developed a series of campaigns to communicate to citizens that when it comes to their education, training and development, they must make the right choice by choosing an NQF-accredited qualification."



▲ Lereto Queenswood Primary School attended one of the NQF Advocacy Workshops

With the launching in 2010 of the Career Advice Services (CAS) project, a flagship initiative of the Minister of Higher Education and Training and managed by SAQA, it was discovered that there was some overlap between the functions of CAS and the NQF Advocacy Project, which necessitated increased collaboration between the two and has resulted in a wider platform being created from which to raise awareness about the NQF.

In 2011, the NQF Advocacy Project's target audience was also more clearly defined. Instead of the 'general public' initially targeted, five clear audiences emerged:

- Policy makers and influencers of policy
- Policy regulators (the NQF family, including SETAs and the Quality Councils)
- Policy implementers (including schools, colleges, universities and all other accredited places of learning provision)
- Organised business (HR practitioners), organised labour, civil society (for instance NGOs involved in skills development) and the public sector
- The general public, especially those living in very poor and rural areas.

"It is crucial that learners understand the NQF as a framework for helping them map their learning and career pathway and we are pleased with the progress made.

"Much more work is needed and SAQA sees the Department of Higher Education and Training

(DHET) Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training, currently in the public comment phase, as an opportunity to ensure that the NQF is widely recognised as a valuable instrument in serving an efficient and effective integrated post-schools system," says Arnesen.

Joe Samuels, SAQA's CEO, supported by his Directors, is charged with keeping the NQF top-of-mind with policy makers, key influencers and stakeholders. NQF ambassadors, on the other hand, are tasked with spreading the NQF message to their communities.

To date, through the NQF Advocacy Project, over 200 NQF Ambassadors from SAQA, the three Quality Councils, selected SETAs and the DHET have been trained.

In addition, roadshows, workshops and seminars are used to target learning institutions, while various projects undertaken in collaboration with CAS are used to communicate with the general public.

"Last year, 30 significant exhibitions and festivals were attended, and this year that number will certainly be exceeded. A number of conferences will also be held in the months and years ahead to help meet our strategic goal of 100% NQF awareness within five years. We are currently running seven regional NQF Level Descriptor roadshows and continuously collaborate with all 12 SAQA Directorates to assist in getting the NQF message out," says Arnesen.

Qualifications frameworks have become a global phenomenon as they provide a common currency





▲ Jordan Bierman informing the learners about the value of the NQF

through which qualifications, and by implication, the skills and competencies of individuals, can be recognised. The NQF is made up of 10 levels described by a set of level descriptors. Different qualifications types are registered on each of the levels as determined by the three Quality Councils. Qualifications registered on the NQF can be offered by any provider that meets the requirements of the Quality Councils and the DHET. SAQA aims to ensure that articulation and mobility across the different sub-frameworks is given serious attention when qualifications are considered for registration on the NQF.

“We need people to think NQF when talking about schooling, tertiary courses or further education and considering their career path. They must connect an NQF level to a relevant qualification. For example, ‘NQF level 4’ must automatically come to mind when talking about ‘matric’.

“In time, all South Africans should see the NQF as a ‘valued and trusted pathfinder’ in the journey of lifelong learning,” concludes Arnesen. [Q](#)

#### NQF ADVOCACY

Project Director: John Arnesen

NQF Advocacy is a SAQA led project which, in collaboration with the three Quality Councils, the Council on Higher Education, Umalusi and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations, aims to build wide public, stakeholder and media awareness, understanding and appreciation of the NQF value proposition.

# Data to guide the nation

Being able to tackle the mammoth task of verifying the qualifications of all public sector officials – both current employees and prospective ones – demonstrates the efficiency of the **National Learners’ Records Database (NLRD)** Directorate.

**R**un in partnership with the Department of Public Service and Administration, this ongoing verification project has included road shows to all nine provinces and has helped increase awareness of the many functions offered by the NLRD.

The achievements of all South African learners are recorded on this system, which has proved an invaluable tool for research and informed policy-making.

Celebrating its 11th anniversary at the end of November, the NLRD is a great ambassador for SAQA’s belief that lifelong learning should be within reach of every South African. The NLRD team’s informal motto is, ‘Growing Our Own’.

Most members of the Directorate are currently furthering their education, and the Deputy Director, Ms Carina Oelofsen, is a shining example of what can be achieved through a commitment to self improvement. She started with SAQA on a learnership programme, which included working towards a National Certificate in Datametrics through UNISA, nine years ago. The learnership saw her undertaking both academic study and doing practical work at SAQA, capturing information on the system she is now so passionate about. With time, she not only achieved her qualification, but used the

opportunity she had been given to prove her capabilities so effectively that she now holds a management position at SAQA and is able to help mentor countless others.

Fourteen other people who underwent this learnership found permanent employment with SAQA.

The NLRD was launched, with sponsorship from the Canadian International Development Agency, as an information system containing qualifications and part-qualifications (including unit standards), as well as learner achievements, to support the management of South Africa’s National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Today, the NLRD contains records of around 11 million learners with details of their achievements, as well as information on quality assurance bodies, their accredited providers, and assessors.

Oelofsen is proud of the fact that the NLRD was the first such system in the world, and that it is still viewed as a global leader. Presentations on the NLRD are often given to visiting delegations from countries such as Tanzania, Ethiopia and Namibia. “Each country’s system must be tailor-made so our function is an advisory one,” says Oelofsen.

*Continued on the next page* ►

“The NLRD is a very robust and versatile system that allows for constant innovation and improvement. Information gaps can be filled when identified and components can be added as needed. One such example is the need to accommodate professional bodies. SAQA recently embarked on a pilot project that will culminate in the recognition of 10 professional bodies, and the registration of their professional designations on the NQF,” she explains. On successful completion of the pilot project, more than 100 further professional bodies will apply for the same recognition.

NLRD Director Yvonne Shapiro and Oelofsen participated in site visits to five of the 10 professional bodies chosen to participate in the pilot project, in order to assess their information systems and their readiness to transmit data to the NLRD. A data-loading workshop was held for the pilot group in March.

The NLRD provides a wealth of information that gives meaningful insights into the education landscape in South Africa. A publication exploring trends in the achievement of qualifications, as submitted by Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs) other than the Council on Higher Education and Umalusi, is in the process of being produced. It will be available in book form and on CD and will contain the analysis of more than 250 000 records of achievement.

This publication follows the success of the *Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa* reports released previously that underlined SAQA's role as a key source of information for human resource development



▲ Yvonne Shapiro, Director: NLRD

in policy, infrastructure and planning. A follow-up report on public higher education trends is under discussion for 2013. These publications give information on graduate trends and availability in South Africa in 54 work-related categories, according to qualification type, NQF level, population group, gender and field of study.

The Eastern Cape provincial government, assisted by Coega Development Corporation (a state-owned entity mandated to develop and operate the Coega Industrial Development Zone), will also benefit from the information gleaned through the NLRD. Coega expressed an interest in obtaining information from the NLRD for the supply side of the Eastern Cape labour market analysis, and Shapiro paid them a visit in March to examine their operation and see how the NLRD can be of assistance.

Newly available and produced by the NLRD team is a brochure that shows how to use the searchable databases, on the SAQA website, of qualifications and part-qualifications, which provide up-to-date information downloaded directly from the NLRD and are user-friendly.



▲ Carina Oelofsen, Deputy Director: NLRD: Data Quality and Information Management

A project in its infancy is that of incorporating into the NLRD the qualification achievements of foreigners working in South Africa, once their qualifications have been evaluated.

It seems the NLRD is poised to grow in reach and influence in the years to come, with ongoing emphasis on enhancing accuracy and quality of data, and managing and analysing the information derived from the data. [↗](#)

**NATIONAL LEARNERS' RECORDS DATABASE**

Director: Yvonne Shapiro  
Deputy Director: NLRD:  
Data Quality and Information  
Management: Carina Oelofsen  
HEQCIS Manager: Lerato Matubatuba

The National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) is the management information system of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NLRD holds records of SAQA and its sub-structures; qualifications and part-qualifications (including unit standards) registered on the NQF; accredited Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs) and their accredited providers; registered assessors; and individual learners and their achievements. The NLRD provides decision-makers with comprehensive information, especially in the fields of labour market trends and education and training, and also undertakes the verification of qualifications obtained by individuals in South Africa.



## Making a village of the global workplace

SAQA's work touches not only the citizens of South Africa, but also the increasing number of people that enter or return to South Africa in the hope of jobs and brighter prospects for their families.

**S**AQA evaluates qualifications obtained outside of South Africa. The service extends to South Africans that studied abroad and foreign professionals wishing to settle in South Africa.

SAQA compares foreign qualifications with local qualifications registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and then offers advice on the corresponding level of the foreign qualification.

This information is used by the applicants to apply for work permits as well as for further study. SAQA evaluates qualifications originating from more than 100 countries on five continents and across a wide spectrum of disciplines, from arts

and culture to engineering and technology, receiving over 20 000 applications per year.

A recent example of how SAQA can impact lives and skills development could be seen at the Medupi and Kusile power plants.

Although the recruitment last year of specialist welders from Thailand resulted in some labour unrest, it was explained by Eskom that very experienced artisans, with knowledge of 'exotic' materials, were needed, and that these skills were not widely available in South Africa.

Shandukani Manyaka, Deputy Director overseeing evaluation in the Foreign Qualifications Directorate, explains that while the Thai artisans' particular skills were needed, their

work would run concurrently with a skills transfer programme that would see South African welders being trained to carry out these specialist tasks in future.

"SAQA's role is to assist the recruitment company in ensuring that any training that takes place happens within the ambit of the NQF, and that participants are able to use their newly-acquired skills to move to other positions or continue with further training.

"In addition, we have to evaluate the qualifications of these approximately 500 Thai welders. Meetings are under way with Thai Education Ministry officials and the evaluation process will then begin in mid March" said Manyaka.

*Continued on the next page* ►

SAQA processes an average of 24 000 applications for the evaluation of foreign qualifications annually. The online application system launched in January 2011 enables access from outside of South Africa and is currently utilised by close to 40% of applicants.

The data gained from evaluating foreign qualifications provides invaluable information on what skills are being imported into South Africa and what level of qualification is being attracted. Interestingly, only a tiny percentage of qualifications are at the low end of the NQF. Generally, analysis of the types of qualification shows that the highest category is among higher education qualifications, followed by academic qualifications at secondary school completion level.

SAQA also contributes to the global network of credential evaluation agencies, in particular with regard to the location of the service within the NQF environment in South Africa.

The quality of South African qualifications is a key objective of SAQA. In the increasingly globalised world, qualifications provide a 'passport' through which skills and competencies can be recognised and transported. [G](#)

#### FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS EVALUATION AND ADVISORY SERVICES

Director: Nadina Coetsee  
Deputy Director: Shandukani Manyaka  
Deputy Director: Matlankose Matsipa

SAQA has the task of evaluating qualifications that have been obtained in education and training systems of countries other than South Africa. People with foreign qualifications who wish to attend South African education institutions or who wish to enter the South African labour market apply to SAQA to have their qualifications evaluated. The Directorate for Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services is responsible for this function.



## Career advice for a brighter tomorrow

Suitcases in hand, **Career Advice Services (CAS)** teams have been knocking on the doors of Further Education and Training Colleges (FETCs) countrywide.

**R**esource Packs, fondly referred to as 'suitcases', contain information packs to help equip Student Liaison Officers (SLOs), also called Student Support Services Officers, to better assist learners when it comes to career decisions. The packs include updates on research into what employers are looking for, tips on overcoming career challenges, policy news and information on the qualifications framework.

"Quality advice is based on good information," says Deputy Director, Intermediaries, Mr Letshego Mokeki.

By March 2012, Student Support Services staff members had been met at 26 FETCs around the country, with CAS aiming to visit all 50 colleges within the next year.

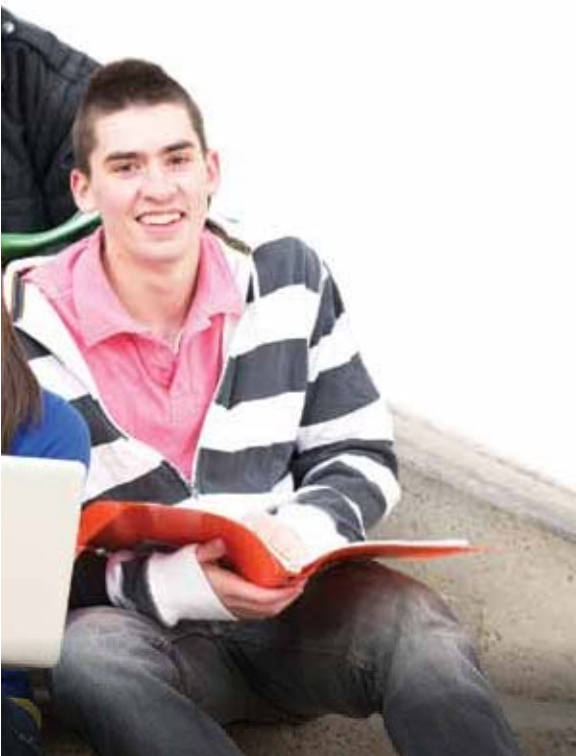
"We have been well received. It is not just about dropping off resource packs, but about

establishing relationships and getting a feel of the issues faced by the colleges," says Mokeki, who has personally been part of some of the visits.

Debriefings are held with CAS teams after the visits to identify problems and challenges experienced at the colleges. This helps SAQA to continuously review and focus its intervention with FETCs.

In October and November, CAS helped the FETCs prepare for their 2012 registrations. Six workshops were held around the country, reaching over 350 college officials. Current visits to colleges are also used to assess any improvements in the registration process as a result of the SAQA training and to use this information to improve the process in 2013.

Central to the work of CAS is Khetha, an educational media campaign created by SAQA under



the leadership of the Department of Higher Education and Training. With the theme – Make the right choice. Decide your Future – Khetha is designed to support every South African to make an informed choice regarding their next career move.

Making a career choice is one of the most important decisions a learner will make in South Africa today. Not only because it will have the single greatest effect on their future, but also because it will greatly affect the social and economic development of the learner's immediate community and South Africa as a whole.

With many of their target audience still youngsters, more and more contact is being made with CAS via social media, and with CAS employing a number of young people, it is ideally situated to be able to provide for these preferred means of communication.

"We get a few queries via Facebook and other social network platforms, and use both Mxit and Twitter to send out information snippets," says Mokeki.

The telephone helpline established to support learners,

parents, teachers, career advisors and institutions handles around 2000 calls per month. Advice can be given in any language, and with the number of advisors recently increased by seven – to 20 – information-seekers are ensured of a speedier response.

Another exciting development is the establishment of a new National Careers Advice Portal for career advice support to learners, parents, teachers and career advisors. This online information system will assist in aligning citizens to suitable learning options, career opportunities and occupations. Tenders for the development of the website closed in January and work should soon be under way.

A series of national and regional events, including the annual Mandela Day Career Guidance Festival – to be held for the third time this year, and career exhibitions around the country, are visual means employed by CAS to bring home the importance of educated career choices.

A network of partner organisations or 'intermediaries' – be they Department of Labour career counsellors, SLOs at FETCs or National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) career guidance practitioners – help provide additional career advice and, in some cases, walk-in centres for learners in rural areas.

"Our intermediaries must have access to good information and we are working on plans to give them access to the same information sources used by CAS advisors. This is an important step in building one solid national network," says Mokeki.

A possible future project is career guidance training for SLOs



▲ Letshego Mokeki, Deputy Director: Intermediaries

and Life Orientation lecturers. Many of these advisors have not received proper training, says Mokeki.

In addition, a publication is being formulated to encourage Grade 12 learners to register in time for further education. This publication will be distributed from June.

The CAS team is brimming with ideas, following a recent study tour to Leicester in the United Kingdom. Mokeki joined senior SAQA and Higher Education and Training and Ministry officials on a visit to the Broadcasting Support Services (known as bss) to learn about their 'Next Step' career advice service and came home with renewed passion and enthusiasm.

All of which can only benefit CAS's goal of accessible, comprehensive and independent career advice that promotes a path of lifelong learning! [🔗](#)

#### CAREER ADVICE SERVICES

Director: Paul West

Deputy Director: Edcent Williams

Deputy Director: Intermediaries:  
Letshego Mokeki

Career Advice Services is an initiative of the Ministry of Higher Education and Training and is managed by SAQA. It aims to provide learners with accurate and expert advice on qualifications and careers so that they are sufficiently equipped to make informed decisions.



# The bigger picture through global relations

SAQA is quietly using the experience gained over the past 15 years to assist other countries with their qualifications frameworks and other education, training and development issues.

**S**outh Africa is among the most advanced in the world when it comes to its National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The South African framework has won wide acceptance, both at home and abroad, and SAQA's National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), an integrated electronic information system, was also the first of its kind in the world.

Despite these achievements, Dr James Keevy, Director of the International Liaison Directorate, is quick to point out that most of the lessons South Africa can share with

other nations were learnt through trial and error. "Our mistakes can be used to advise our international counterparts on what not to do, and our successes can help give them direction, but it must be stated that the needs of each country are unique. There is no one system that can be said to fit all.

"In fact, we have learnt many valuable insights from our dealings with other countries, and these liaisons help ensure we are in a position to keep abreast of international best practice."

SAQA worked tirelessly since

2001 alongside other stakeholders to see the dream of a Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) being given life. Approval was given by SADC Ministers of Education in September 2011 for its establishment and the ground work is now under way by the SADC Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA). A close eye is being kept on developments in Europe to see what lessons can be shared by the two regions.

Aligned with the vision of an RQF, but at a more advanced stage, is the SADC Qualifications Portal. A pilot portal has been developed, funded by SAQA with support from Microsoft South Africa. SAQA has worked closely with five participating member states: Namibia, Seychelles, Mauritius, Zambia and Tanzania and the SADC Secretariat, to establish this centralised, web-based, information-sharing facility. The portal will allow SADC countries to



◀ Staff members of the Tanzanian Commission of Universities



◀ SAQA participates in capacity building sessions in Tanzania

SAQA staff makes their way through the busy streets of Addis Ababa for a capacity building session ▶



access information on each others' qualifications. When fully developed, it will incorporate full and part-time qualifications that are formally recognised in SADC member states.

Hard at work at SAQA is an intern, Shawn Danisa. After undergoing training at Byte Technology, Danisa was keen to apply the theory that he had learnt. Research was conducted into the different Content Management Systems. It was decided that Microsoft SharePoint was the best option. Thereafter began the installation of the software and the configuration of the server so that it can be accessed publicly.

In March, Danisa began to look at the functionality of the portal. He is confident that a front-end version, which will then be expanded to all 15 SADC countries, will be ready this year.

Relationships are also being fostered elsewhere. Ms Shirley Lloyd and Keevy have been paying several visits to Tanzania, where the Tanzania Commission for Universities has requested assistance from SAQA in creating an NQF for the country's higher education sector. This project started in 2010 and should be completed next year.

Technical support is being given

by SAQA to a similar project in Ethiopia, for the development and implementation of the Ethiopian National Qualifications Framework (ENQF). The Higher Education Strategy Centre (HESC) is the custodian of the ENQF and the International Liaison Directorate of SAQA started working with the HESC in December 2010. SAQA sends a person to be based in Ethiopia for three months at a time and Keevy himself makes regular visits.

Advisory support has been lent to the Seychelles. SAQA often welcomes study visits from foreign delegations and also on the cards is a staff exchange programme with the Namibia Qualifications Authority.

SAQA was in 2007 commissioned to research teacher qualifications in the 53 Commonwealth member states, as a base for the compilation of a qualifications comparability table. The findings of the research has informed the decisions of the Commonwealth Ministers of Education and has also provided a useful basis for the ongoing work on professional standards for teachers within the Commonwealth. A second phase of research is now being proposed.

SAQA conceptualised the Transnational Qualifications

Framework, a reference system that links national qualifications systems and frameworks and allows worker mobility among small states of the Commonwealth, and there 'is early noise that they want to continue the project'.

With South Africa considered a key player in the national qualifications framework, Keevy and his colleagues are still keen to learn what they can from other nations and share the lessons SAQA has learnt, to create quality qualifications globally. [↩](#)

#### INTERNATIONAL LIAISON

Director: James Keevy

Deputy Director: Shirley Lloyd

International Liaison has the broad vision of developing capacity within SAQA to increasingly collaborate with international partners on all matters of mutual interest concerning national and/or regional qualifications frameworks. The directorate has the following objectives: to actively contribute to the development of qualifications frameworks internationally; to identify and contribute to new and critical thinking related to qualifications frameworks; and to inform the development and implementation of the South African qualifications framework through involvement in international best practice.



## NQF Level Descriptors Roadshow a huge success

*By Lucas Malambe, Deputy Director: Communications*

The Level Descriptors Roadshow for the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) proved a great success, attracting academics and professionals with an interest in the qualifications framework. These included human resources practitioners and stakeholders in the education, training and development (ETD) sector.

**S**AQA embarked on the series of regional roadshows in February and March 2012 to create awareness and inform the general public and ETD stakeholders how the Level Descriptors are to be applied in the qualification landscape.

Mr Jody Cedras, SAQA's Director for Registration and Recognition, says, "It exceeded our every hope and expectation. Every venue was packed to capacity and at times we had to make space for more people."

The NQF Act, No. 67 of 2008, made provision for a 10-level framework where levels of learning achievement are arranged in ascending order from 1 to 10. Each level on the NQF is described by a statement of learning achievement known as a Level Descriptor. Level Descriptors are used in the development and evaluation of qualifications and part-qualifications for registration on the NQF.

"The roadshows provided

a unique opportunity for HR practitioners, FET Colleges, higher education institutions, schools, professional bodies, and other ETD stakeholders across the country to hear how the shift from a 8-level NQF to a 10-level NQF would ensure coherence in learning achievement in the allocation of qualifications and part-qualifications to particular levels," says Cedras.

SAQA's roadshows were held at Mbombela (27 February 2012), Johannesburg (29 February 2012), Mangaung (07 March 2012), Durban (09 March 2012), Port Elizabeth (13 March 2012), Cape Town (15 March 2012) and Tshwane (29 March 2012).

In agreement with the three Quality Councils (QCs): the Council on Higher Education (CHE), Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi), and the Quality Council on Trades and Occupations (QCTO), SAQA developed the content of the Level Descriptors for each level of the NQF.

The final Level Descriptors were published for public notice on 11 November 2011, in the Government Gazette – notice no. 34749. This followed an extensive public comment process which was concluded at the end of January 2011. According to the policy, the Level Descriptors will be reviewed at least every five years by SAQA in consultation with the three QCs.

"Following the publication of the Level Descriptors, the public needed to know how it would affect the way they do business. Level descriptors can be applied in different contexts and environments. For example, it affects how HR practitioners evaluate applications for jobs or promotions. It also influences the work of curriculum developers and facilitates the assessment of national and international comparability of qualifications and part-qualifications," says Cedras. These are but some of the ways in which level descriptors could be used.



The general public should note that the shift from an 8-level framework to a 10-level framework has meant that some qualifications have moved levels on the NQF. For instance, a Masters Degree has moved from level 8 on the old framework to level 9 on the new framework, while the National Senior Certificate (matric) remains at level 4.

Jody Cedras, Director: Registration and Recognition



John Arnesen, SAQA Director: NQF Advocacy, introducing delegates to SAQA and the NQF

Urging delegates to read the Level Descriptors for the NQF, Cedras explains that, “As statements of learning achievements, level descriptors describe each level of achievement on the NQF and provide a broad indication of learning outcomes that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.”

Level Descriptors make it easier to compare South African qualifications against each other regardless of the field of study. They also facilitate the evaluation of qualifications obtained in other countries based on the achievement of learning outcomes rather than the name of the qualification or reputation of the institution where it was obtained.

In addition, Level Descriptors will help a person to better understand the strength and level of a qualification she/he want to pursue before registering for it. Likewise, employers can check where a particular qualification is pegged within the NQF in making decisions on employing someone, as the Level Descriptors explain the applied competencies expected to be gained from a qualification.

Even so, learners must always make sure that a qualification they want to pursue is registered on the NQF. The aspirant student or parent can find out from the NQF and Career Advice Services Helpline (0860 111 673) whether a qualification is registered. This is very important because there have been many cases in which learners registered at institutions that were not legitimate or, even if they were, the qualifications they offered were not NQF-registered. Learners realised later, after they had spent a lot of time and money studying, that their efforts were a waste.

The Level Descriptors are designed to meet the needs of

academic as well as occupational qualifications. They embrace learning in a wide variety of contexts (vocational, occupational, academic and professional) and environments (classroom, workplace, laboratory, field, clinic, community, etc.). This allows for linkages between qualification levels in the academic world and occupational levels found in the world of work.

The Level Descriptors roadshows also provided an opportunity for Cedras and his team to describe the learning achievements and outcomes at a particular level of the NQF that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

The document, for instance, explains that level 1 comprises basic skills such as, but not limited to, problem solving, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an ability to recognise and solve problems within a familiar, well-defined context; the ability to recall, collect and organise information clearly and accurately; sound listening and speaking, reading and writing skills, and basic numeracy skills; and accountability, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an ability to work as part of a group.

On the other end of the spectrum, NQF level 10 demands expertise and critical knowledge; the ability to conceptualise new research initiatives, and create new knowledge or practice; and offer significant original insights into new complex and abstract ideas, information or issues, among other competencies.

“The roadshows were fantastic”, says Cedras. “It allowed us to have conversations with both the public and stakeholders in the ETD sector. The eagerness for such roadshows was overwhelming.”

To view the Level Descriptors for the NQF document, including detailed criteria for each level, visit the SAQA website: [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za)

# SAQA publications

SAQA has been quite busy during the past few months, producing and distributing a number of high-quality and informative publications concerning education and training in South Africa.

After 15 years of developing and implementing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), SAQA is considered as a world-renowned authority of NQF knowledge and capacity building. Therefore SAQA wishes to transfer this knowledge and its intrinsic values to its stakeholders, and inform the further development of the NQF to truly serve the learner. As all South Africans are viewed as lifelong learners, SAQA would like to encourage all interested parties to access the soft copies of these publications from its website – [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za), or obtain a hard copy from SAQA's Strategic Support Directorate.



## The SAQA Bulletin Volume 12 Number 1

The collection of papers included in this edition of the SAQA Bulletin is drawn from a symposium that took place on 08 and 09 September 2011. The symposium was jointly arranged by SAQA and the International Labour Organisation. The overarching purpose of the symposium was to facilitate deep engagement with the nature of NQFs by engaging

with the theoretical underpinnings and practical development of the NQF in South Africa and beyond. An important focus of the symposium was to consider lessons learned in the global NQF community and participation in conversations around NQFs.



## The SAQA Bulletin Volume 12 Number 2: Key Readings: The South African NQF 1995-2011

The SAQA Bulletin Vol. 12 No. 2 was compiled as one of the most comprehensive collections of articles from academics and role-players in the global NQF field, and illustrates SAQA's role in the development of the NQF and its various contributions towards education and training. The

publication further serves as an informational reader and blueprint for considerations to be accounted for in the developing stages of an NQF, and its management and implementation. It reflects on the many contributions of SAQA's retiring CEO, Mr Samuel Isaacs, as it contains a few of his key articles. This Bulletin has proven to be very popular and will serve many purposes, amongst others as a text book for students in SAQA's current and future academic courses. Demand for the publication has grown drastically since its launch on 15 February 2012, and it has sparked great interest amongst SAQA's stakeholders.



## The SAQA Brochure

Providing an overview of SAQA's history, directorates, operations and activities, the SAQA Brochure is an excellent source of information for individuals who would like to become acquainted with SAQA and its

many functions. The brochure highlights SAQA's commitment to serving the learner and its commitment to a culture of lifelong learning in the country.



## The RPL Resolution and Working Document

The Resolution and Working Document on RPL records the resolutions adopted during the February 2011 RPL Conference – representing the knowledge, experience and views of over 350 people. As a vital part of lifelong learning, RPL can be very effective in enabling adult learners to access higher education and vocational qualifications. Since access

is one of the key principles of the NQF in South Africa, RPL will serve as an important strategy to increase access to education, training and development. With an initial print-run of 6 000 copies, SAQA is in the process of distributing the booklet as widely as possible. Plans are also under way to workshop the document with organised labour and business.



## The NQF Implementation Framework

The NQF Implementation Framework informs and draws on the strategic planning cycles of the NQF implementation partners and presents these objectives in an integrated manner. The NQF Implementation Framework provides a future vision of what can be achieved

over a five-year cycle and towards which the NQF partner organisations will align their own strategies.



## The System of Collaboration

The objective of the System of Collaboration Document is to guide the mutual relations of SAQA and the Quality Councils, namely the Council on Higher Education (CHE), Umalusi and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), in such a manner as to promote constructive co-operation in advancing the objectives of the NQF.



## Legislation Matters

Legislation Matters is SAQA's comprehensive guide concerning NQF-related legislation. The NQF Act, No. 67 of 2008, forms the cornerstone and basis of SAQA's understanding of the NQF as a framework for communication, co-ordination and collaboration across education, training and

development. The booklet has been developed as a guideline to inform SAQA NQF's stakeholders. It is currently available in hard copy format.



## NQF Level Descriptors Booklet

SAQA has formalised the classification of qualifications through the publication of Level Descriptors for the NQF. The NQF Act, No. 67 of 2008, made provision for a 10-level framework where levels of learning achievement are arranged in ascending order from one to 10. A

statement of learning achievement, known as a level descriptor, describes each level on the NQF. Level Descriptors are used in the development and evaluation of qualifications and part-qualifications for registration on the NQF. SAQA, in agreement with the three Quality Councils, developed the content of the level descriptors for each level of the NQF.

The Level Descriptors are designed to meet the needs of academic as well as occupational qualifications. They embrace learning in a wide variety of contexts and environments and cater for people with special needs when it comes to the accessing, analysing and managing of information and communication – in terms of reading, listening and speaking, including Braille and sign language.

# Unlock the door to success with a quality qualification

The door that leads to success doesn't open by itself. However, a quality qualification earns you the right to enter.

That's why you have to insist on a NQF-registered qualification. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) oversees the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) – a set of principles and guidelines that assists in the creation of a qualifications system for South Africa.

In turn, the NQF ensures that you have access to reputable education and training establishments that provide you with qualifications that are recognised locally and internationally.

A NQF-registered qualification gives you the right to cross the threshold to success with confidence.



*"Quality education is the surest road to success. With a NQF-registered qualification behind my name, success is my destiny."*

*Lawrence Booyens  
Diploma in Journalism*





SAQA House  
1067 Arcadia Street  
Hatfield  
Pretoria

Postnet Suite 248  
Private Bag X06  
Waterkloof  
0145

Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications Call Centre: +27 (0) 12 431 5070  
Helpdesk: +27 (0) 86 010 3188  
Switchboard: +27 (0) 12 431 5000  
Fax: +27 (0) 12 431 5039

General enquiries: [saqainfo@saqa.org.za](mailto:saqainfo@saqa.org.za)  
Information on the evaluation of foreign qualifications: [ceeq@saqa.org.za](mailto:ceeq@saqa.org.za)