

# **Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers**

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## Executive Summary

The South African Qualification Authority Act of 1995 defines an education and training provider as:

*A body which delivers learning programmes which culminate in specified National Qualification Framework standards and/or qualifications, and manages the assessment thereof.*

Education and training providers (hereafter referred to as providers) are at the base of the education and training system in that they are the organisations that actually engage in teaching and learning and deal directly with learners, the 'clients' whom the education and training system is meant to serve. It is therefore of critical importance that providers develop quality management systems (QMS), and that they receive the necessary support in order to operate within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

This document addresses the following:

- ❑ General issues related to QMS for providers;
- ❑ Paradigms in quality management and quality assurance;
- ❑ Elements that would constitute a QMS approach; and
- ❑ The SAQA quality template.

In addition, this document provides an elaboration of the core criteria that providers need to conform to in order to receive accreditation from their constituent ETQAs. The inclusion of these elaborated criteria is a direct response to the perceived needs of providers and is intended to facilitate the development of QMS among providers.

This document also points to the need to allow sector-specific core criteria to be developed, if they are found to be necessary. However, it is emphasised that such sector-specific criteria cannot contradict the core criteria and can only be added to the core criteria. Such sector-specific criteria, however, need to be sanctioned by SAQA.

It is important to note that this document does not replace the *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers* document, but should rather be read in conjunction with it.

As in *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers*, a process approach has been adopted which takes into account the need for a phasing-in of aspects of the system within the broader model of transforming the national education and training system.

Also, research findings strongly indicate a need for an approach for the establishment of quality management systems to be developmental in nature. The core criteria discussed in this document are therefore seen as the minimum requirements for the first phase of provider accreditation.

## Overview and Introduction

### Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers and related documents

With the publication of this policy guideline document, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) takes an important step towards facilitating the development of quality management systems (QMS) for education and training providers.

A parallel document entitled *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs* was released by SAQA in August 2000. In that document, the view of quality endorsed by SAQA is explicitly set out, as are the ways in which quality management systems may be operationalised by ETQAs, and the roles, responsibilities and functions ETQAs have in relation to providers and to SAQA. *Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers* has drawn on the approach adopted in *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs*. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that these documents be read jointly.

Furthermore, the links between *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs*, *Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers* and *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers* need to be stressed, since all these documents form part of an integrated strategy by SAQA to enable the development of quality management systems among ETQAs and providers. The links between the three documents are important because of the nature of the relationship between ETQAs and providers. Providers need to be clear about what ETQAs are mandated to do, as much as ETQAs need to be aware of quality management issues pertaining to providers.

### Role distinctions in a quality assurance paradigm

In *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs*, the following useful role distinctions are drawn in terms of what the document refers to as the “**NQF Organisation**”:

In many ways, the NQF System is comparable to a large organisation, having a clear and shared purpose laid out in the Act.

Within the “NQF Organisation”, SAQA creates the vision, sets the policies, defines the timetable, delegates the tasks and defines quality of performance for those to whom they are delegated. It is the equivalent of the Board and senior executive of an organisation.

The SGBs define the service standards<sup>1</sup> in terms of the specific outcomes<sup>2</sup> that should match the vision described by SAQA.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘standards’ refer to criteria used to measure customer or client service

<sup>2</sup> ‘specific outcomes’ in this context would include all outcomes specified by the sub-sector

The **Providers** are the powerhouses, the productive units, the creators and constituent providers of the service.

The **ETQAs** have the quality audit and assurance role.

But, what of the NSBs and the suggested Moderating Bodies? What is their role within this organisation?

Their task is complex and diverse. As already discussed, the NQF entails providing services that are diverse in the content, as diverse as the customers for the service.

By creating multiple **NSBs**, to act in essence as agents of SAQA, this diversity is managed. SAQA requires that each NSB include representation from the various stakeholders for the ultimate service. In this way, SAQA is seeking to ensure that the standards developed by individual SGBs reflect the vision, address the problems identified and meet the needs of the diverse stakeholders. They are to quality assure the standards setters<sup>3</sup>.

The potential **Moderating Bodies** have a similar role. To simplify operations, providers are to be served by a single ETQA, but the implementation of standards is not to be limited to a particular sector of providers. (Indeed this would be contrary to two of the goals of the Act, the development of an integrated framework and enhanced mobility between the different parts of the system of providers). So different ETQAs will be quality-assuring services based on the same standards. Mobility and credibility will depend on an adequately consistent interpretation of the standards by all that use them. The role of the Moderating Bodies will be to assure this consistency across ETQAs. They too are agents of SAQA.

*(Quality Management Systems for ETQAs, page 12)*

**This document focuses specifically on providers – the “creators and constituent providers of the service”.**

### **Focus of the document**

The main aim of this document is to provide guidelines for the establishment of quality management systems for providers. These guidelines are given to enable movement towards the development of QMS for providers. This includes the explanation of criteria for accreditation, elaborating on the core criteria that providers will need to be able to satisfy. The core criteria were defined in the *ETQA Regulations* (R 1127 of 8 September 1988) and also in the *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs* and *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers*. However, this document recognizes that in terms of the implementation of quality management systems, a developmental approach is most appropriate.

This policy guideline document thus has the following aims:

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<sup>3</sup> ‘setters’ refers to standard generators

1. To set out broad models of quality management and describe how SAQA's approach to quality management relates to these.
2. To explicate the core criteria that providers need to satisfy regarding the development of quality management systems within their organisations or institutions.

### **Structure of the document**

The first section deals with the research process undertaken on behalf of SAQA and key findings of the research.

The second section discusses some of the most prominent quality management systems used worldwide and locating the SAQA quality approach in terms of dominant approaches.

The third section deals with the core criteria that providers need to satisfy regarding the development of a quality management system for their institutions or organizations.

## **Conventions and Abbreviations**

A list of the most common abbreviations and acronyms used in the *Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers* appears below.

Also, although it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the terms relating to quality assurance as it appears in *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs*, the terms are included in this document to facilitate a common understanding.

### **Acronyms used in this document**

<b>CTS</b>	Conformance to Specifications
<b>CHE</b>	Council for Higher Education
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>ETQA</b>	Education and Training Quality Assurance Body
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>HEQC</b>	Higher Education Quality Committee
<b>ISO</b>	International Standards Organisation
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NSB</b>	National Standards Body
<b>QMS</b>	Quality Management Systems
<b>SAQA</b>	South African Qualifications Authority
<b>SGB</b>	Standards Generating Body
<b>TQM</b>	Total Quality Management

## **Terms and definitions relating to quality assurance**

(Paraphrased from *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs*, pages 6,7):

**Quality Management Systems** means the combination of processes used to ensure that the degree of excellence specified is achieved. A quality management system is the sum of the activities and information an organization uses to enable it to better and more consistently deliver products and services that meet and exceed the needs and expectations of its customers and beneficiaries, more cost effectively and cost efficiently, today and in the future.

**Quality Assurance** means the sum of activities that assure the quality of products and services at the time of production or delivery. Quality assurance procedures are frequently applied only to the activities and products associated directly with the goods and services provided to external customers.

**Quality Audits** are activities undertaken to measure the quality of products or services that have already been made or delivered. In itself a quality audit has no impact on quality.

**Quality Control** is undertaken by the person(s) who make the product (or deliver the service) for internal purposes.

## The Research Process And Key Findings

The research conducted included a literature review of dominant global and national quality management systems and a field research among groups of providers of education and training.

The literature review will be discussed under “Prominent Quality Management Systems used Worldwide”.

The field research included the following provider groups:

- ❑ Providers of further education and training;
- ❑ Higher education providers;
- ❑ Providers of workplace-based education and training;
- ❑ Education and training quality assurance bodies;
- ❑ Independent schools;
- ❑ Quality assurance coordinators of the provincial departments of education; and
- ❑ Private training providers.

Please refer to the attached research findings contained in Annexure A.

The field research findings represent a powerful request for a phased approach to what might be termed ‘**quality development**’ rather than ‘**quality management**’ or ‘**quality assurance**’. Such an approach would have the following characteristics:

- ❑ In the initial phase, certain minimum (‘first wave’) requirements would be set, largely related to functionality (at least in the school and technical college sectors).
- ❑ A strong support strategy would be designed and implemented in this initial phase (characterised, for example, by formative rather than inspectorial evaluations, timeframes for improvement, and innovations such as a SAQA customer relations function and simplified guidelines).
- ❑ The support strategy would be weighted in favour of under-resourced institutions (for example, but not limited to, rural institutions).
- ❑ Greater communication and coordination would be generated among structures responsible for quality assurance in different sectors.
- ❑ The promotion of (and training for) self-evaluation strategies would be a key aspect of the support strategy.
- ❑ Provisional accreditation of providers would be an aspect of the initial phase.

- The definition, through consultation, of a ‘second wave’ of requirements, would form the basis for a second phase of quality development. In the initial phase these requirements would be optional, but would become compulsory elements over time as the support strategy builds capacity.

Taken as a whole, the research findings represent an array of hopes, fears and confusions surrounding SAQA’s approach to quality management systems for providers of education and training, largely but not wholly based on close prior engagement with relevant SAQA documents.

Taken together, the findings represent a complex mix of acceptance of SAQA’s principled intentions, a range of constructive suggestions towards the construction of a quality management model, and, in certain key respects, a powerful critique of SAQA’s ‘quality template’ in terms of both feasibility and desirability. It should be reiterated that the findings presented in Annexure A are only indicative of possible realities. In some cases, such as the emphasis on self-evaluation and the preference for a supportive approach to quality management, the themes were powerfully and consistently expressed across groups, which allows at least the formulation of the hypothesis that these concerns are widely shared among providers of education and training. The research suggests strongly that quality debates should address the concept of a quality development strategy as urgently as the notion of a quality management systems model.

## **Prominent Quality Management Systems used Worldwide**

The following is a summary of some prominent quality management systems and approaches used throughout the world. It is not intended to be a critique of such systems, but should rather serve as an introduction to providers. Also, these should not be seen as possible ‘models’ for providers, but are only examples of approaches to quality management systems. Where possible and appropriate, an ‘education context’ has been included.

The quality management systems discussed are:

- Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
- European Quality Management Award
- Australian Quality Award
- The Koalaty Kid Program
- The Deming Prize
- The ISO 9000/2000 Quality Management Code of Practice
- Investors in People
- The South African Excellence Model
- The Balanced Business Scorecard
- The Scottish Quality Management System

## Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award - USA

### ***Core values and concepts:***

- a) Leadership
- b) Strategic planning
- c) Customer and market focus
- d) Information and analysis
- e) Human resource focus
- f) Process management
- g) Business results

### ***Significance of the Baldrige Award criteria to Education and Training:***

This management system is used successfully in the education and health sectors in the USA. The core criteria remain the same for these sectors, except where Customer and market focus will be replaced by (c) Student and Stakeholder focus; and Human Resources focus will be replaced by (e) Faculty and staff focus.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

## The European Quality Award

### ***Core values and concepts:***

- a) Leadership
- b) Policy and strategy
- c) People management
- d) Resources
- e) Processes
- f) Customer satisfaction
- g) People satisfaction
- h) Impact on society
- i) Business results

### ***Significance of the European Quality Award criteria to Education and Training:***

This system strongly focuses on 'Self-assessment'. The self-assessment is a comprehensive, systematic and regular review of the organization's activities. The benefits are perceived to be:

- A rigorous and structured approach to business improvement
- An assessment based on facts and not individual opinions
- A means to achieve consistency of direction and consensus on what needs to be done

- A means to educate the people in the organization on how to apply, in a meaningful way, the principles of ‘Total Quality Management’(TQM)
- A means to integrate various quality initiatives into normal business operations
- An objective assessment against a set of criteria which have become widely accepted across Europe
- A means of measuring progress over time
- Process-induced improvement activities focused where it is most needed
- A methodology for application at all levels ranging from the individual business unit to the organization as a whole
- A means to create enthusiasm amongst the people within the organization and give fresh impetus to their pursuit of business excellence

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

### The Australian Quality Award

#### ***Core values and concepts:***

- a) Leadership
- b) Policy and planning
- c) Information and analysis
- d) People
- e) Customer focus
- f) Quality of process, product and service
- g) Organisational performance

#### ***Significance of the Australian Quality Award criteria to Education and Training:***

As in the case of the previous quality management systems, the core criteria for this system are very similar, also focusing strongly on self-assessment. The self-assessment criteria are broad in scope and non-prescriptive to allow for interpretation that best fits the needs of the organization.

Both the European and Australian Quality Awards categorize their core criteria into ‘Enablers’, ‘Drivers’ and ‘Results’.

The ‘Enablers’ include Policy Planning, Information and Analysis and People. These are seen to mobilize the organization to achieve its objectives.

The ‘Drivers’ include Leadership and Customer Focus.

The ‘Results’ refer to the Quality of the Process, Product and Service.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

## The Koalaty Kid Programme - USA

### ***Core values and concepts:***

The Koalaty Kid Programme is an approach, not a prescribed system. The four key factors are:

- a) Active involvement of the whole school community
- b) Committed leadership
- c) Employment of a system for continuous improvement
- d) An environment that celebrates success

### ***Significance of the Koalaty Kid Programme to Education and Training:***

The Koalaty Kid Programme embraces the spirit and substance of ‘Total Quality’, a systematic approach to continuous improvement. Using this approach, teams identify targets for improvement. Then they work towards achieving these by establishing standards of excellence, communicating clear expectations involving all stakeholders, managing by processes, measuring progress, and recognizing and awarding success.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

## The Deming Prize - Japan

### ***Core values and concepts:***

The Deming Prize focuses on the application of statistical quality control.

- a) Policy
- b) Management of organisation
- c) Education
- d) Information gathering
- e) Analysis
- f) Standardization
- g) Control
- h) Quality assurance
- i) Results
- j) Future planning

### ***Significance of the Deming Prize to Education and Training:***

The ‘Mt Edgecumbe High School’s Modified Deming Points for Quality in Education’ has adapted Deming’s fourteen points for quality in organizations to suit the needs of an educational institution.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

## The ISO 9000/2000 International Code of Practice for Quality Management Systems

### ***Core values and concepts:***

The focus of this International Standard is to improve the processes of an organization in order to enhance performance.

- a) Customer focus
- b) Leadership
- c) Involvement of people
- d) Process approach
- e) Systems approach to management
- f) Continual improvement
- g) Factual approach to decision-making
- h) Mutually beneficial supplier relationships

### ***Significance of the ISO9000/2000 International Code of Practice for Quality Management Systems to Education and Training:***

It is not the purpose of this International standard to imply uniformity of quality management systems, which makes the system adaptable according to size, structure, market and resources of the organization. The focus of this system is:

- To identify and meet the needs and expectations of its customers and other interested parties (i.e. employees, suppliers, owners, society), to achieve a competitive advantage, and to do this in an effective and efficient manner;
- To achieve, maintain and improve overall organizational performance and capabilities.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

## Investors in People

### ***Core values and concepts:***

Investors in People aims to help organizations to improve performance through a planned approach to:

- a) Setting and communicating business goals
- b) Developing people to meet these goals

Key principles include:

- a) Commitment to the development of people
- b) Planning – clear aims and objectives understood by all
- c) Action – to support the development of people

- d) Evaluating – the impact of people development

***Significance of Investors in People to Education and Training:***

The ultimate goal of Investors in People is Total Quality Management supported by lifetime learning in the people of the organisation.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

The South African Excellence Model

***Core values and concepts:***

As in the case of the European and Australian Quality Awards, this system makes use of the terms ‘Enablers’ and ‘Results’ when defining their core criteria. The ‘Enablers’ describe how the ‘Results’ are achieved.

The core criteria are:

- a) The Enablers: Leadership, i.e. strategy and planning; customer and market focus; people management; resources and information management
- b) The Results: Processes, i.e. social responsibility; customer satisfaction, people satisfaction, supplier and partnership performance

***Significance of The South African Excellence Model to Education and Training:***

The South African Excellence Model can be seen as a longer-term improvement plan that any organization could apply to effect ‘continuous improvement’.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

The Balanced Business Scorecard

***Core values and concepts:***

The Balanced Business Scorecard has four focus areas that is concentrated on:

- a) Financial
- b) Customers
- c) Learning and growth
- d) Internal business process

### ***Significance of The Balanced Business Scorecard to Education and Training:***

The Balanced Business Scorecard is a strategic measurement system that allows managers to keep track of the deployment of their strategic plans and the subsequent improvement of their strategic performance.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

### **The Scottish Quality Management System**

#### ***Core values and concepts:***

The Scottish Quality Management System is a comprehensive auditing system that can be used by organisations to evaluate themselves against requirements and help to guide and support quality developments. The system is based on 14 standards which describe quality features or characteristics of management systems:

- a) Strategic management
- b) Quality management
- c) Marketing
- d) Staffing
- e) Staff development
- f) Equal opportunities
- g) Health and safety
- h) Premises and equipment
- i) Communication and administration
- j) Financial management

### ***Significance of The Scottish Quality Management System to Education and Training:***

The Scottish Quality Management System has been designed to meet the requirements of the Scottish equivalent of SAQA, the SQA.

(For references and more information, please refer to the Bibliography.)

PLEASE NOTE: From this brief overview, it is clear that there are many commonalities between the different quality management systems. This tries to highlight the fact that providers may use any (or a combination) of quality management approaches, and that howsoever a provider sets up its quality management, it should be possible to comply with the minimum criteria for accreditation.

## Locating the SAQA Quality Approach in terms of Dominant QMS Models

### The Quality Management Debate

The literature review of debates in quality management and assurance highlighted two dominant approaches of quality assurance and management. These are the ‘Total Quality Management’ (TQM) and ‘Conformance to Specifications’ (CTS) approaches. However, it is recognized that there are variations and adaptations of both models. (Refer to the examples of other Quality Management Systems in chapter 2). These two broad approaches are representative of most of the approaches currently in use, and also represent the broad paradigmatic tensions in the quality debate.

In the discussion following, these two approaches are deliberately simplified and polarized in order to contrast key features of possible understandings of ‘quality’, but it is recognized that most quality management systems will be a ‘hybrid’ of two or more approaches, including elements of Total Quality Management and Conformance to Specifications.

Also, the emphasis is on ‘quality development’ and continuous improvement, rather than on the choice of an instrument. For example, the ETQA and its constituent providers could negotiate commonly agreed-upon procedures within a particular environment. This makes it possible to be context-sensitive and to focus on the ‘process’ of quality development, rather than on the tools. Taking a process approach ensures that quality management has a developmental impact on the organization and the sector.

### Total Quality Management (TQM)

The starting point of Total Quality Management (TQM) is quite different from the structural and instrumentalist approaches. TQM sees the objective of quality management and quality assurance as part of the process of managing a changing organisation, culture and environment and using change management to align the mission, culture and working practices of an organisation in pursuit of continued quality improvement. TQM thus views all quality management processes as being specifically designed to constantly challenge an organisation’s current practices and performance and thus to improve an organisation’s inputs and outputs. Part of this mission, for example, entails assessing where and when internal obstacles occur.

A critical element of the TQM method is that it is highly “people-orientated” and participative. It assumes that a quality culture is an integral and necessary part of an organisation, and that all line functions within an organisation are quality interfaces. This approach assumes that all members of an organisation are responsible for quality assurance (maintenance and improvement) and thus that quality is not a centralized activity, but devolved to various functional and organisational levels.

TQM can broadly be described as embodying five critical principles, namely:

- ❑ The creation of an appropriate climate within an organisation, particularly with regard to establishing a quality culture and empowering all members to participate in and take responsibility for quality improvement. An aspect of this climate is the creation of a ‘dissatisfied state’: a state in which critical questions are constantly being asked about current inputs, processes, performance and outcomes. This requires a process of research, analysis, measurement and feedback, with a view to improving the current state of operations.
- ❑ A customer orientation whereby customer requirements are agreed, and customers are an integral part of delivery. Regular progress evaluations are carried out in all functions against identified customer needs and expectations. In TQM the customer is both an internal and an external stakeholder and target group, and is the focus of all levels of an organisation’s hierarchy.
- ❑ Management by research, data and fact. This principle stresses the importance of ‘objective’ information from which an organisation can generate an assessment (as opposed to subjective or hearsay evidence). Emphasis is placed on statistical and quantitative research techniques to generate information. Surveys are also a common feature of TQM, but are used in the context of assisting with fact-finding. Data generated is then analyzed and translated into action plans, indicators and objectives for improvement. These plans are then compared with previous plans, and improvement is quantified. What is useful about this research technique is that over time patterns do and can emerge which are useful tools in measuring and predicting improvements.
- ❑ Having a people-based and participative management philosophy that stresses problem-solving and seeking improvement opportunities in teams.
- ❑ Continuous quality improvement is the ongoing objective of TQM and stresses that an organisation must remain cognizant of its purpose to strive for improvement. This sense of purpose guides an organisation in the allocation of resources to its plans.

TQM is undoubtedly a difficult, time-consuming and arduous process that demands qualities and skills of leadership and staff lacking in most organisations. It therefore cannot be seen as a ‘quick-fix’ solution or strategy. It is the most comprehensive and analytical of models, and is conceptually in line with the more fluid management style associated with market-driven and entrepreneurial organisations.

#### Conformance to Specifications (CTS)

In direct contrast to TQM is the range of conformance-to-specification models and systems, which consist of “a set of clearly defined clauses or characteristics and

[describe] a basic set of elements for developing and implementing a quality management system.” (Holland: 2000). The purpose of a conformance model is to control each step of a production process so that products match technical specifications. In other words, the model specifies how an organisation’s activities should be performing so that the output of the organisation is in line with its specifications (as determined by the organisation itself or by a customer).

Essential to this model is the documentary evidence that proves that such procedures have been followed and that quality has been achieved. Each step in the process is tracked and documented procedures to be followed are set out in manuals. These procedure manuals describe an organisation’s systems, and form the basis of what is assessed. So, it is not the actual organisational practices, or inputs, which are assessed, but the conformance of an organisation’s procedures to a standard or specification.

Conformance may be driven by external registered assessors who inspect both the procedures manual and the various documents related to these procedures to validate conformance. In short, the conformance to specification model is primarily concerned with meeting and maintaining specifications, and not with improving these specifications.

In the TQM model, quality is more than just meeting the requirements of particular criteria or standards. Quality, within the TQM model, is about systemic transformation. As well as addressing the meeting of requirements, TQM deals with how criteria are shaped, how they are met, and who has to meet them. It is far more flexible an approach to quality and views quality in comprehensive ways. It is holistic.

The conformance to specifications approach, as the name indicates, tends to emphasise conformance to predetermined criteria, specifications or standards. These are treated in rather rigid and technical ways and the processes through which such requirements are met are not seen as being of central importance. It is technicist.

As mentioned before, integrating CTS and TQM approaches may be more helpful than polarising them. SAQA has a mandated responsibility to enhance quality in education and training. However, SAQA recognizes that quality management approaches will be developed from both a CTS and a TQM point of view, or from a combination of both.

## **SAQA, the NQF and Quality**

The NQF, the SAQA Act of 1995 and the National Education Policy Act of 1996, among others, are explicit about the proposed orientation to quality within the South African education and training context, and more generally.

At the heart of this orientation is the **concept of transformation**, which includes:

- ❑ Transformation of policies and policy formulation processes;
- ❑ Transformation of structures and relations among them;
- ❑ The creation of an integrated national framework;
- ❑ Increasing access to and mobility within the education and training system;

- ❑ Developing modes of democratic organisation and practice; and
- ❑ Links to the political, social and economic reconstruction and development of South African society.

In addition, Regulation R1127, under the SAQA Act of 1995, defines quality in the following way:

*The combination of processes used to ensure that the degree of excellence specified is achieved.*

The objectives specified by the Act indicate that the ultimate purposes of QMS are to:

- ❑ Enhance learning in South Africa by increasing the number of learners, the frequency of learning, and the relevance and durability of what is learned.
- ❑ Establish a framework of qualifications and standards that are relevant, credible and accessible.

These expressions of values are consistent with the total quality management (TQM) model, but contain strands of CTS also. The SAQA orientation to quality is generally holistic and focuses on processes that deepen democracy, flexibility within the system and client/learner-centredness; it also has to ensure that specifications of excellence are met.

However, this does not mean that SAQA has only articulated statements of orientation to quality. SAQA has also outlined what it sees as “**quality indicators**”, particularly in terms of assessing applications from providers. Providers would need to ensure that:

- ❑ Their aims are clear;
- ❑ Processes are identified;
- ❑ Procedures for quality management policies are in place;
- ❑ Sustainability of quality management strategies are in place;
- ❑ They have the ability to develop, deliver and evaluate learning programmes;
- ❑ They have the necessary financial, administrative and physical resources to deliver their programmes;
- ❑ They have democratic modes of organisation and practice;
- ❑ They have clear learner-centred policies and ways of dealing with learning programmes;
- ❑ They are able to conduct off-site or work-site activities;
- ❑ They have clear policies for assessment and its management; and,
- ❑ Have policies for programme development in terms of content, people, procedures, practices and resources.

The above indicators are based on the objectives of the NQF, for both qualifications and programs, that providers:

- ❑ Use the standards and integrate theory and practice

- ❑ Utilise suitable learning and assessment processes for the prescribed learning outcomes
- ❑ Better enable individual learners to contribute to the reconstruction and development of the country and the individual's social-political-economic development
- ❑ Facilitate and enhance access, mobility and progression
- ❑ Redress previous inequities, particularly making available opportunities for those who could not previously access them
- ❑ Periodically collect, store and report information describing achievements for each of the other indicators

Therefore, learner-centredness, relevance, democratic ways of operating, flexibility within the system, increasing access, transparency, accountability, recognition of prior learning and critical learning and teaching styles underpin SAQA's sense of quality. All of these are outlined in the *SAQA Criteria and Guidelines for Providers* document and it supports the notion of quality development as a 'process', rather than a quality management 'system', per se.

All of the above features of SAQA's orientation to quality, may be brought down to five **essential categories of criteria for assessment** that need to be used to ensure that quality assurance and management exist. These categories of criteria are:

- ❑ Baseline criteria;
- ❑ A quality management continuum;
- ❑ Outputs, inputs and processes;
- ❑ Ongoing improvement, accountability and transparency;
- ❑ Democratic organisation and practice

PLEASE NOTE: It is in the light of the above-mentioned orientation to quality and with an emphasis on quality 'development', that the following section should be viewed. SAQA maintains that this document is not meant to be prescriptive with regard to the quality management approaches taken by ETQAs and their constituent providers. Each ETQA, together with its providers, has to take into account the context within which it is functioning and investigate which approach will best suit the needs of the sector.

At the same time, as much as the ETQA and its providers may decide on how to go about developing quality management systems, SAQA has to balance the responsibility of ensuring that the objectives of the NQF are advanced, within a flexible and developmental approach. The 'core criteria' discussed in chapter 4 address the directives as interpreted from the objectives of the NQF. In a sense it gives guidance on the type of 'evidence' a quality assurer will look for when an organization is audited. It is therefore meant to give guidance to the ETQA and its providers on the key areas of quality development.

## Elaborating On The Core Criteria

This section elaborates on each of the core criteria drawn from the *ETQA Regulations* (No R1127 of 1998) that providers should satisfy.

Table 1 below captures the eight criteria in ways that allow for easy and quick reference. This is followed by an explication and elaboration of the core criteria.

PLEASE NOTE: By using a table, it is not the intention to suggest that the criteria are equally important, but rather that these are elements of quality management systems. The ETQA and its providers will decide on areas where the greatest focus should be, depending on the status of quality management in the sector. For example, it may mean that one ETQA initially decides to focus on ‘Learner and Assessment policies’ (point 6 and 7 in the table), as this may be the most critical quality issue in that particular sector, while another might focus on other core criteria.

**Table 1: Core Criteria for Education and Training Providers**

Criterion	Elaboration
1. Policy Statement	The organisation’s aims, objectives and purposes need to be spelt out.
2. Quality management systems	Identify processes and outline procedures that implement quality management in the organisation.
3. Review mechanisms	Outline the ways in which the implementation of policies would be monitored.
4. Programme delivery	Outline how learning programmes would be developed, delivered and evaluated.
5. Staff policies	Outline policies and procedures for staff selection, appraisal and development.
6. Learner policies	Policies and procedures for the selection of learners are outlined, and learners are given guidance and support.
7. Assessment policies	Outline policies and procedures for forms of assessments that are used and how they are managed.
8. Management system and policies	Indicate the financial, administrative and physical structures and resources of the organisation, as well as procedures of accountability within the organisation.

Some points of clarification may be needed:

- ❑ Firstly, there are overlaps between the criteria as some criteria repeat particular aspects which are picked up by other criteria. A clear example is the reference to applied and integrated competence in Criteria 4, 5 and 7. The overlaps are deliberate, and reflect the nature of QMS as a holistic approach to organisations as systems in which different aspects of the system impact on each other. At the same time, though, the emphasis in each criterion is different and certain key aspects of the organisation – such as assessment policies and practices – emerge in different ways and from different perspectives.
- ❑ Secondly, the above criteria are core criteria, and are by no means all the criteria that can or should be used. However, it is proposed that no provider will be accredited if any of the core criteria are not met. They are core in the sense of being minimum requirements without which accreditation will not be possible.
- ❑ Thirdly, it is recommended that the development of sector-specific criteria is the ongoing responsibility of ETQAs. It should be noted, however, that no sector-specific criteria should contradict any of the core criteria or replace the core criteria. Sector-specific criteria should rather add criteria that are found to be necessary for a given sector. All sector-specific criteria would need to be submitted to SAQA for endorsement.

#### Criterion 1: Policy statement

***The organisation's aims, objectives and purposes need to be spelt out.***

The purpose of an organisation having a policy is to indicate the ways in which the organisation views itself, what it sets out to achieve, who it directs itself towards and, fundamentally, why it believes there is a need for it to exist.

However, given the need for a TQM approach and the existence of the NQF, organisations' policy statements need to also clearly locate themselves within the values and principles articulated in the NQF. In terms of these, policy statements need to:

- ❑ Show how the organisation is located within the NQF;
- ❑ Show how democratic practices inform the structure, management and operations of the organisation;
- ❑ Clearly indicate the approach adopted in regard to teaching and learning activities; and
- ❑ Indicate how ongoing development of activities will be ensured through assessment, auditing, monitoring, research and review practices.

A policy statement is not necessarily a detailed explanation of everything an organisation does, but an expression of the principles upon which an organisation bases itself as well as the ways in which it intends to operate, with whom, and for what purpose.

The following questions may help providers to define their policy statements:

1. What are the organisation's values and principles?
2. How do these values and principles link with those of the NQF?
3. What are the structures, systems and activities of the organisation that attempt to apply such values and principles?
4. What is the aim of the organisation?
5. What does it offer?
6. To whom is the organisation directed?

## Criterion 2: Quality Management Systems

### ***Identify processes and outline procedures that implement quality management in the organisation.***

As was noted earlier, 'quality' in the TQM, SAQA and NQF senses of the term is intended to mean a holistic, integrated, democratic, process-oriented and flexible approach that would:

- ❑ Enhance learning in South Africa by increasing the number of learners, the frequency of learning, and the relevance and durability of what is learned; and
- ❑ Establish a framework of qualifications and standards that are relevant, credible and accessible.

In order for providers to meet the specification of criterion 2, providers would need to clearly describe the nature of operations within their organisation. How exactly is quality assured in the organisation, on all levels? A clear description of the workings of the organisation and how they assure quality needs to be provided.

The following questions may help the organisation to clarify its quality management processes:

1. How does the organisation, in practice, create and sustain a quality culture within the organisation?
2. How are the relevance, comprehensiveness and clarity of standards used in the organisation ensured?
3. How is information about the workings of the organisation collected, how often and by whom?
4. How are learners' needs actually met?
5. How often are programmes delivered by the organisation reviewed?
6. How does the organisation ensure that its facilitators of learning actually possess the competence to both facilitate the learning effectively and assess learners in ways that are consistent with the NQF?
7. How does the organisation ensure that learning and assessment activities are monitored and reviewed?
8. How does the organisation ensure that what is gathered from reviews, audits and/or monitoring in fact leads to improvements in the organisation's activities?

9. What are the mechanisms the organisation uses to report back to people within the organisation?
10. How does the organisation ensure that resources available to it are utilised effectively and efficiently, and are used to good effect?
11. How does the organisation report to and generally relate to the ETQA under which it falls?
12. How does the organisation relate to other providers in the area that it works within, if this applies?

As can be seen from the questions above, this criterion requires a fairly comprehensive description of the workings of the organisation in terms of how they do or do not enhance the development of quality and ensure its sustainability within the organisation.

PLEASE NOTE: Accreditation will not be statutorily possible if such QM systems are not in place, or if the organisation (and the ETQA) involved does not have a concrete plan to establish these.

### Criterion 3: Review mechanisms

#### ***Outline the ways in which the implementation of policies will be monitored, researched, audited and/or reviewed.***

In responding to Criterion 3, providers need to provide a detailed account of how, by whom, how often and for what purposes the activities of the organisation will be researched, monitored, audited and/or reviewed.

It has been emphasised that one of the important features of quality within the TQM approach is a developmental emphasis. This criterion is important because organisations can only develop if they monitor and review their own activities.

Various options exist in this regard, including external evaluations, the use of moderators, internal review and monitoring systems, assessments, appraisals, research, and auditing.

Providers need to provide a clear description of what system they have in place, how it operates in practice and what its concrete achievements are. Also included here should be a clear indication of how such review findings get fed back into the organisation so that improvements are operationalised.

In order to generate such a description, providers may find the following questions helpful:

1. What are the review, monitoring, research and/or auditing mechanisms the organisation has in place?
2. How do these mechanisms work?
3. How often are they carried out?
4. By whom?

5. How are review findings reported back within the organisation?
6. How do the review findings inform improvements in the organisation?

#### Criterion 4: Programme delivery

##### ***Outline how learning programmes would be developed, delivered and evaluated.***

At the heart of providers' activities are the programmes that they deliver. This, more than anything else, establishes the rationale for the existence of the provider in the first instance. A 'provider' is a 'provider' because it offers particular programmes to people for which they may gain qualifications. It is therefore critical that providers give a clear and coherent description of the ways in which the delivery of their programmes happen in practice.

Given that the establishment of the NQF is aimed at transforming the nature of education and training, particularly at the level of programme delivery, it is also crucial for providers to be able to relate their descriptions of their programme delivery to NQF principles.

The following questions may be helpful to providers to identify ways in which they can fulfil the requirements of Criterion 4:

1. What is the nature of the programmes the organisation delivers?
2. What is the NQF status of the programmes (e.g. NQF level 5)?
3. What are the components (for example, programme modules) that make up the programmes?
4. How often are the programmes delivered, and what is the duration in notional learning hours?
5. What are the modes used in the delivery of the programmes? (For example, the use of group work, opportunities to learn in the workplace, or the role of distance learning would be described at this point.)
6. To what extent is the delivery of the programmes flexible?
7. How is learner-centredness ensured in the delivery of the programmes?
8. How does programme delivery ensure that the programmes are relevant to learners?
9. How are learners assessed during the programme delivery? How often? By whom?
10. How are learners given feedback on their performance during the delivery of programmes and what forms does this take?
11. How are resources planned for the delivery of programmes?

An additional range of rather deeper questions is suggested in a recent research report relating to teacher education programmes:

1. The programme practices must develop in learners an applied and integrated competence:

- A programme should ensure that learners are able to integrate (*horizontally*) the knowledge and skills delivered through the different courses or modules that make up the programme.
  - A programme should also ensure that learners are able to integrate (*vertically*) the following dimensions of competence:
    - ◆ The ability, in an authentic context, to consider a range of possibilities for action, make considered decisions about which possibility to follow, and to perform the chosen action (a practical competence);
    - ◆ The theoretical basis for and the knowledge which underpins and informs the action taken (foundational competence); and
    - ◆ The ability to connect decision-making and performance (practical competence) with understanding (foundational competence) and use this to adapt to change or unforeseen circumstances, to innovate within one's own practice, and to explain the reasons behind these innovations and adaptations (reflexive competence).
2. The programme should be conceptualised and delivered in a manner that integrates theory and practice, and strengthens provider-workplace linkages.
- A programme should work closely with relevant workplaces in order to develop learner skills.
  - Relevant work experience should be linked to the rest of the programme, and students should be well prepared for it. Work experience should be integral to the programme and not an 'add-on'.
3. The programme – and the programme ethos – should support lifelong learning in concrete ways.
- Learners, for example, might be involved in programme design and implementation, either formally (for example through decision-making structures) or informally (for example, by making decisions regarding the nature of their assignments).
  - Relevant learner-initiated activity might be recognised towards the qualification.
  - Assignments should be designed to encourage problem solving within authentic contexts.
  - A programme should prioritise *and teach* critical engagement, reasoning and reflective thinking.
  - A programme should ground teaching in a wider social, economic and political understanding and awareness.
  - The provider should have a workable strategy for the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

4. The programme provider should adopt inductive rather than deductive approaches to programme design, or at least motivate why deductive approaches to programme design are justified:
  - ❑ A programme should be designed on the basis of research, and some or all of this research should be conducted among target learners.
  - ❑ Conversely, a programme should not be designed through an exclusively deductive 'desktop' exercise.

Though this latter range of questions was developed through research into teacher education programmes, they are clearly relevant to any learning programme. The emphasis in this criterion is on the nature of the learning and teaching process itself, including the assessment process. This criterion is central to ensuring that education and training practices in the delivery of programmes by providers are in accordance with NQF principles.

PLEASE NOTE: Accreditation will not be statutorily possible if these principles are not followed, or, at the very least, if providers have not identified the need to locate their programme delivery in NQF terms and developed a plan for implementation.

#### Criterion 5: Staff Policies

#### ***Outline the policies and procedures for staff selection, appraisal and development.***

The emphasis in Criterion 5 is on the organisation's relations with its own staff. Providers will need to indicate whether their staff members are competent to carry out their roles as facilitators, and how they know whether this is the case. They would also need to relate this assessment of competence to NQF principles.

With regard to employment procedures, providers may find the following questions helpful:

1. What criteria are used in the staff selection process?
2. Who selects staff in the organisation?
3. What selection procedures are followed?
4. To what extent are the stipulations of the Employment Equity Act of 1998 respected in the selection process?

In terms of meeting the requirements of staff in terms of the NQF, providers may find the following questions helpful:

1. To what extent does staff possess applied and integrated competences as education and training development practitioners? (See also references to applied and integrated competence in Criterion 4 above.)
2. How does staff ensure the integration of theory and practice in the delivery of the programme? (Here questions of work experience to develop

- practical understandings of relevant theories, or the use of simulated work environments, and, generally, strategies to ensure the development of applied competence among learners need to be addressed.)
3. To what extent does the provider ensure that all staff has access to ongoing forms of professional development and that they are themselves ‘lifelong learners’? (Here the emphasis is on the development and self-improvement of staff and on the procedures providers have in place to ensure that this happens within the organisation.)
  4. To what extent do organisations ensure that their staff members design their activities in ways that are informed by the organisation’s mechanisms of review, research, monitoring and/or auditing? (In other words, are teaching and learning methods informed by reflections on existing practices, or do activities continue unchanged despite the findings of reviews, research, monitoring and/or auditing in the organisation? Does staff decide on changes in programme delivery purely on the basis of intuition? Or is intuition informed by research into and feedback received on how well or how poorly a programme is being delivered?)
  5. How does the organisation ensure that its staff is competent to carry out assessment activities in ways that are both applied and integrated? (Staff competence in assessment practices is key in the life of learners, since this is the basis upon which learners are qualified. It is, therefore, critical that facilitators are adequately skilled to carry out this function effectively and efficiently. Since, in NQF terms, assessment is cast within the framework of lifelong learning and integration, assessment here refers to ways in which continuous assessment can inform the teaching and learning process, through, for example, learner portfolios. See also references to the assessment of applied and integrated competence in Criterion 7 below.)

The purpose of Criterion 5 is clearly to ensure that policy on staff selection and appraisal should be informed by principles of increased access and respect for employment equity policy, as well as ensuring the transformation of education and training practices and adherence to NQF principles.

#### Criterion 6: Learner policies

***Policies and procedures for the selection of learners are outlined, and learners are given guidance and support.***

The focus of Criterion 6 is on learners. Issues of selection of learners, the extent to which their needs are met and what support and guidance they are given need to be explicitly described. Here providers need to be mindful of the following key NQF principles with regard to learners:

- Learner-centredness
- Learner participation
- Relevance of the programmes to learners

- ❑ Recognition of prior learning
- ❑ Lifelong learning

In order to show how these NQF principles are being applied, providers may find the following questions helpful:

1. How are learners selected for the programme?
2. To what extent do such selection procedures recognise the prior learning learners have?
3. What is the demographic composition of the learner population? (Gender and race are clearly crucial, but attention should also be given to how learners from outlying areas are attended to, and to poverty indices.)
4. Is the organisation planning to diversify the demographic composition of the learner population, taking into account historical disadvantages and discrimination?
5. How does the provider ensure that the programme is relevant to the needs and aspirations of the learners?
6. How does the delivery of the programme encourage learner participation?
7. How does the organisation identify the nature of support learners require?
8. What support is given to learners?
9. What guidance is offered to learners? Why?
10. How are opportunities for further learning provided for by the organisation?
11. How, by whom and how often are learners given feedback on their performance?

#### Criterion 7: Assessment Policies

##### ***Outline the policies and procedures for the forms of assessment used and how they are managed.***

Assessment policies are more than assessment practices. They include assessment practices but go beyond them as well. Assessment policies describe the approaches that are used by an organisation in its assessment practices. For example, are assessment approaches mainly examination-based? Do assessment policies recognise principles of lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning and integration of theory and practice? Are assessment policies informed by understandings of notions of failure and deficits or do they work in developmental, supportive and continuous ways? As such, assessment policies need to indicate what approach the organisation adopts with regard to assessment and whether this approach is in line with NQF principles.

Assessment policies also outline how the processes of assessment will be managed: – by whom, how and how often. They include internal assessment, external assessment, moderation, provision of feedback to learners and maintaining records of assessment. They also include ways in which support that learners may require are identified and ways in which support is provided. Thus, assessment policies should not be conflated with assessment practices, although they include them.

In order to meet the requirement of Criterion 7, providers may find the following questions helpful:

1. What is the organisation's approach to assessment?
2. Is the organisation's approach consistent with NQF principles?
3. How does the organisation's assessment policy incorporate principles of lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning and integration of theory and practice?
4. How are assessments conducted, by whom and how often?
5. What are the mechanisms that the organisation puts into place to assure the quality of assessments conducted? Are moderators used for assessments?
6. Are policies and procedures for possible appeals in place?
7. How are learners given feedback on the ways in which they have been assessed? How does this occur? Who does it, and how often?
8. How does the organisation ensure that assessments are used to identify and provide for the support and guidance learners need?
9. How are assessment results fed back into programme development?

Finally (see also the references to the development of competence in Criterion 4), the assessment practices of a programme must be applied and integrated. Therefore:

- ❑ A programme should assess whether learners are able to integrate (*horizontally*) the knowledge and skills delivered through the different courses or modules, which make up the programme.
- ❑ A programme should also assess whether learners are able to integrate (*vertically*) the dimensions of competence referred to in Criterion 4. In brief, these are:
  - ◆ Practical competence;
  - ◆ Foundational competence; and
  - ◆ Reflexive competence.
- ❑ The assessment strategy should assess the extent to which learners have the ability to apply what they have learned in authentic and changing South African contexts.
- ❑ Assessment should be ongoing and developmental.

#### Criterion 8: Management Systems and Policies

***Indicate the financial, administrative and physical resources of the organisation, as well as procedures of accountability within the organisation.***

Criterion 8 refers to the managerial capacity of the provider to carry out its functions. The provider would need to indicate its capacity to deliver the programme effectively and efficiently and in an accountable manner.

However, given the enormous differences in size, type and focus of providers, this criterion must be carefully contextualized, taking into account, for example, the management of partnerships in the delivery of programmes. In the Criteria and Guidelines for Providers document, different types of providers are identified, i.e. 'delivery only site; assessment only site', etc. In addition, there is also an awareness of SMME providers, which may include an individual as a provider.

In this regard providers may find the following questions helpful:

1. What is the management and administrative structure of the organisation?
2. How are decisions taken in the organisation, by whom and in relation to what?
3. What is the financial resource base of the organisation? What are the sources of funding? Does the organisation have a plan to become self-sustaining, if it is not already?
4. Does the organisation have adequate human and material resources to carry out its intended functions?
5. What are the systems used by the organisation to manage and be accountable for its finances?
6. More generally, to what extent is the organisation run in ways that are transparent and accountable?

## Conclusion

SAQA has published ‘core criteria’ in *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers* which providers should satisfy for the purpose of accreditation, in line with the ETQA Regulations (R1127) of 1998.

This document supports *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers*, and in addition sets out:

- ❑ The findings of research conducted among providers as it relates to quality management approaches
- ❑ Examples of dominant quality management systems
- ❑ SAQA’s approach to quality, particularly in terms of the recognition that quality management is a developmental process with the added notion of continuous improvement
- ❑ The notion of context-sensitivity – this document does not try to promote a ‘one-size-fits-all’ quality management approach. It recognizes that sectors, providers and modes of delivery will differ substantially, but that all providers will have to meet the minimum criteria to meet statutory requirements
- ❑ Guidelines on the interpretation of core SAQA criteria relating to providers
- ❑ It also includes suggestions for the development of sector-specific criteria, if these are found to be necessary in particular sectors.

SAQA operates necessarily within a mixed quality management approach, making use of elements of total quality management and conformance to specifications paradigms. It is critical that ETQAs and providers, in turn, also adopt a balanced approach.

Acknowledging the need for substantial change processes over time within provider organisations, this document also suggests that SAQA will emphasise quality development as much as quality management, which means that designing, for example, strategies for overseeing the provision of support among providers in the establishment of effective quality management systems, are essential.

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# Annexure A

Research brief:

The South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) commissioned Paul Musker and Associates (PMA) to conduct research among providers and ETQAs to ascertain how the following issues are perceived and experienced:

- General issues related to QMS;
- Paradigms in quality management and quality assurance;
- Elements that would constitute a new QMS model; and
- The SAQA quality template.

The following are the findings: (p34 – 42)

## 1 Feasibility and Receptiveness

By and large attitudes to the development of a quality management model were favourable, though important reservations were expressed. General overarching comments related to:

- ❑ Concerns about the cost of quality management systems.
- ❑ The lack of a consensual definition of quality in education.
- ❑ The multiplicity of structures responsible for quality in different sectors.
- ❑ Divergent opinions across the various groups as to whether there should be one overarching quality management model or different models for different sectors and even for different types of provider.
- ❑ The need for a *framework* for quality management, rather than a model, on the grounds that a framework would allow for context-sensitivity and allow for the development of local solutions to quality management requirements.

## 2 The Tendency Towards Conformance Models

Extracts from the higher education focus group report illustrate a concern in that sector regarding the continuing predominance of a ‘conformance to specifications’ model. New pressures in this regard are seen to be emanating from the Department of Labour<sup>4</sup>, and from the Department of Education’s three-year planning requirement.

## 3 Support for a Mixed Model

Several groups challenged the neatness of the distinction between total quality management (TQM) and conformance to specifications (CTS) models:

- ❑ The private training providers argued explicitly for an integrated model.
- ❑ Workplace-based providers gave examples of how they already have a mixed model, in that conformance is required by external agencies, while internal company strategies are often related to TQM or similar quality approaches.

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<sup>4</sup> See Holland, M. (2000). A Review of South African ETQA Quality Management and Quality Assurance Models. Johannesburg: Paul Musker and Associates for the South African Qualifications Authority.

#### 4 Support for an Adapted Conformance Model

Several groups (private training providers, workplace-based providers and independent schools) argued for a conformance model, or an adapted conformance model which encourages ‘reflection, improvement and transformation’. Their reasons differed:

- ❑ The private training providers argued for a ‘fitness for purpose’ approach which ‘satisfies the market that you are preparing your students for’.
- ❑ The independent schools group defended the need to ensure ‘functionality’ in South African schools as a minimum legislative requirement.

The workplace-based providers argued that quality management systems are an internal organisational affair, since they are a competitive tool, and that therefore a conformance to specifications model is required to establish minimum requirements across providers.

#### 5 Arguments Against a Conformance Model

The arguments against a conformance to specifications model were not generally linked to support for TQM:

- ❑ The department of education respondents presented the most explicit argument against the use of conformance approaches in education, since education is not comparable to a production process, and emphasised the role of unit standards and for institutions to become ‘self-evaluative’.
- ❑ The independent schools group found TQM ‘too managerial and mechanistic’, and favoured a continuous ‘school improvement process’ in which ‘there is no end point’.
- ❑ The independent schools noted, however, that their opposition to TQM were more to do with the connotations of the term than with the content set out in the Holland literature review<sup>5</sup>, and in effect argued for a mixed model.

#### 6 The Difficulties of a Single Quality Management Model

Various groups expressed concern about the generation of a single, generic quality management model, for a variety of reasons:

- ❑ delivery modes are diverse;
- ❑ institutional types are diverse; and
- ❑ different departments within institutions are diverse

#### 7 Quality Improvement versus Window Dressing

Other powerful critiques were levelled against the SAQA quality template by the department of education and higher education respondents:

- ❑ The department of education respondents argued that the template does not address sufficiently the need to intervene directly to make a difference to the quality of delivery in the classroom, which they described as *the most critical gap*. Unless the model attempts to understand holistically what teachers do in order to promote good quality learning, the documentation required is regarded by this group as *so much window-dressing*.
- ❑ The higher education respondents agreed with one respondent, who argued that *... the template as it stands is potentially just a lot of documents. I would like to put more time and energy into four or five strategic focus areas. The template could force us to spread*

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<sup>5</sup> Holland, M. (2000). *A Review of Quality Management and Quality Assurance Models for South African Providers*. Johannesburg: Paul Musker and Associates for the South African Qualifications Authority.

*ourselves too thinly. I would prefer our own internal quality management system, with key focus areas that we identify ... It could be the same old problem – we accumulate documents and send them through. The old cynical approach.*

- ❑ The higher education group added that the effort of generating the documentation must be matched by a corresponding level of discussion and feedback.

## **8 The Importance of Stakeholders**

All respondents agreed that stakeholder involvement in quality management is crucial, with some cautions as follows:

- ❑ That stakeholder involvement does not usually happen spontaneously, particularly in rural areas, and structures therefore need to be created.
- ❑ That the capacity which needs to be built *must be determined from the internal provider's perspective.*
- ❑ That parents, as key stakeholders in the schooling sector, need to be *aware of their own role in the learning process.*
- ❑ That very divergent stakeholder opinion needs to be carefully managed.
- ❑ That a balance needs to be struck between a 'democratic culture' of participatory management and the need for a rapid response to ensure global competitiveness, which may mean that *'short-circuit' mechanisms [may be needed to] take as many people as possible through the shortest decision-making routes.*

## **9 The Involvement of Learners**

All the groups devoted especial attention to the role of learners in a quality management system. The following points summarise the various discussions:

- ❑ That learners need to learn to be part of the quality management system.
- ❑ That learner counselling and the recognition of prior learning are aspects of the quality of education and training on offer.
- ❑ That formal structures are crucial in the successful involvement of learners.
- ❑ That learners should be involved in the evaluation of teachers, programmes and facilities, and this should form part of a culture of feedback and reflection leading to concrete actions.
- ❑ That learner performance in work experience is a crucial indication of quality, though the information is difficult to obtain.

Two groups, however, raised difficulties regarding the involvement of learners:

- ❑ The workplace-based providers argued that ... *the extent to which you can involve learners depends on the complexity of the organisation.*
- ❑ The further education and training group were unanimous in their opinion that it would be difficult to have learners involved to any high level in QM processes – for a whole range of reasons: lack of knowledge, lack of time, or the need to commit to studies.

## **10 Teaching and Learning Strategies**

The independent schools group noted the importance of allowing for different teaching and learning styles, suggesting that schools should be required to state their particular teaching and learning approach and comment on how they allow for diversity.

The workplace-based providers suggested that providers should be asked:

- ❑ how they assess their trainers/teachers;
- ❑ how they assess their learners; and

- ❑ how they assess the effectiveness of their learning materials.

## 11 The Gathering of Evidence

Respondents offered a wide range of comments on how evidence of quality should be gathered, as well as the nature of evidence that is important:

- ❑ Through research which *feeds back into modes of delivery, programme development and teaching practice*.
- ❑ Through regular, cyclical, continuous assessment of learners.
- ❑ By *breaking the auditing pattern* to avoid *internal complacency*.
- ❑ Through assessment which gives learners useful feedback on progress.
- ❑ Through 3-5 year review processes *to ensure that the larger processes are still on track*.
- ❑ Through longitudinal studies to track progress.
- ❑ Through auditing processes which examine *the variables which could bring about improvement*.
- ❑ By gathering data on *the quality of transformation and organisational change, including the degree of participation in and ownership of strategic goal-setting exercises*.
- ❑ By assessing processes as well as outputs, building capacity *to identify the causes of levels of achievement, not only the achievement results*.
- ❑ Through peer reviews.

With regard to peer review processes, two cautions were expressed. The private provider group noted that peers are in fact competitors, which introduces a different dynamic. The higher education group noted that peer review can result in uncontextualised recommendations, particularly when an under-resourced institution is evaluated by a more advantaged one.

Several groups emphasised self-evaluation as a central strategy in the development of a quality management system:

- ❑ Personnel inside the organisation should be trained in evaluation, to complement the work of external auditors.
- ❑ Communication and consultation strategies should be *conscious and not assumed*.
- ❑ Defining the ETQA as *an enabler, an interpreter of regulations and a support as well as the body which audits the self-assessment processes of providers*.

## 12 Redress and Special Support

The ETQA focus group pointed out that nothing in the SAQA quality template addresses issues such as redress and special support for identified groups in any explicit way.

## 13 Global Competitiveness and Local Employability

One group (the independent schools respondents) emphasised the need to attend, in a quality management strategy, to global competitiveness (and therefore international standards) as well as local employability (and therefore vocationally oriented strategies).

## 14 The Importance of Ethos

One group (the independent schools respondents) noted the absence of any reference to *ethos* in the list of SAQA quality elements.

## 15 Identity Crises

Several groups problematised the notion of ‘customer’, arguing, for example, that often the learner is only the immediate customer, behind whom lies an array of ultimate customers in society at large. One group (departments of education) noted that the identity of the ‘provider’ is also not always clear.

## 16 Lack of Capacity

The issue of implementation capacity arose again and again. One independent school respondent, commenting specifically on the SAQA quality template, expressed the opinion that its implementation in many schools would be equivalent to *flying to the moon*.

In other groups respondents expressed pessimism regarding institutional capacity to implement the principles set out in the quality template, for various reasons:

- ❑ lack of time;
- ❑ data gathering is not a business priority;
- ❑ lack of capacity because of the size of the organisation;
- ❑ lack of departmental support (FET sector);
- ❑ excessive demands in terms of policy and legislation; and
- ❑ quality demands are seen as management demands.

Additionally, respondents from the university sector cautioned against introducing a quality system which ignores what has already been achieved in recent innovations and places an unwarranted strain on capacity.

## 17 The Need for Support

The following extracts from focus group reports (taken from the discussion of ‘general issues in the quality debate’) illustrate that providers of education and training in several sectors feel strongly that intensive support of various kinds is required in the development of quality management systems. For example:

- ❑ Without a much higher level of commitment and support from national, the further education and training (FET) respondents felt that the FET sector will not be able to *pick up the ball* and contribute to the national drive towards quality in education and training.
- ❑ FET respondents argued that urban institutions were generally *up to speed* while the further one moved from the cities the less the institutions were resourced and prepared for the changes ahead.
- ❑ The independent schools group pleaded for all bodies involved in quality assurance to get together and speak to each other about what they are doing, and developing a common direction.
- ❑ The higher education group argued for *support as well as audits*, and that *SAQA should be involved in establishing a more developmental approach to the three-year [planning] requirements*.
- ❑ A small number of respondents expressed their frustration at being confused and unable to get the criteria for providers from SAQA in order to try to get accreditation. They also requested copies of documents such as ‘Criteria and Guidelines for Providers’ which would help them to understand what they needed to do to as providers.
- ❑ Private training providers asked what SAQA could do to facilitate greater communication across the sector, particularly to discuss SAQA related issues and ways to respond to these.
- ❑ The private training providers suggested that SAQA should do the following:

- *Have a well staffed Customer Relations Office to help with queries, give advice and assistance*
- *Simplify the guidelines and publicise and distribute them broadly*
- *Give more direction to providers*

### **18 Reiterating the Need for Support (I)**

In the discussion of ‘elements of a new quality management model’, the need for support strategies for providers in the development of quality management systems was once again a central theme:

- *Audits should be constructive, identifying what is being done well and including help in correcting problems and putting down timeframes for such corrective action.*
- *Assistance is needed to develop self-assessment strategies and ‘quality management standards’.*

### **19 Reiterating the Need for Support (II)**

In the discussion of the SAQA ‘quality template’, the need for support strategies was again a recurring theme, with particularly detailed arguments emerging in the independent schools and ETQA groups:

- *The independent schools group found the SAQA quality template very sophisticated ... even within our sector.*
- *The same group argued that the template needs to be divided into two components. The first would contain minimum legislative requirements to ensure functionality; the second would contain requirements which would initially be optional, but which providers would have to evolve towards.*
- *The ETQA group argued that providers should be allowed to evolve towards advancing levels of quality management rather than imposing an unsustainable list of demands on all providers, irrespective of size or capacity. They proposed that providers should be assisted to establish the criteria for their own accreditation. Once the agreed upon level is achieved, the next milestones would be negotiated. Providers, they argued, should be able to expect guidance and support in their efforts to become part of the national system.*
- *There was unanimous agreement in the same group that flexibility in implementation was critical, and that, for the next while at least, quality management should be an individualised process of continual improvement for providers rather than an absolute externally imposed.*
- *The independent schools group argued for ... a culture of commitment ... A good example of a simple question to ask a provider would be ‘What do you do to monitor the quality of education in your school?’ You want to get people thinking about how their provider institutionalises reviews and reflective processes. SAQA cannot ask too much at this point, it is counterproductive. What a good starting point might be is to not assess quality per se, but to assess what procedures and systems are in place.*
- *The same group agreed that the function of the body overseeing this process is, for the time being, not so much one of inspection as stimulation, guidance, and encouragement: Assessment comes afterwards. A system of temporary accreditation might be necessary.*