

The role of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) in showing trends in the education and training sector

This fact sheet provides information that relates to the NQF and the NLRD. It reveals the role the NLRD plays within the NQF and the broader education and training landscape. It describes what the NQF is and what it does. It also explains what the NLRD is and how it has been used and continue to be used to show trends in learning pathways in the education and training sector.

What is the NQF?

Imagine a building plan of a 10-storey building. The NQF is like a plan of such a building with levels one to 10 for learning. It stipulates standards for qualifications and part-qualifications. Apart from qualifications and part-qualifications, other information is also registered and recorded on the NQF. This includes professional designations and learner achievements, respectively.

What does the NQF look like?

If we were to visualise the NQF, it would look like the diagram below.

National Qualifications Framework					
Level	Sub-framework and qualification types				
10	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework	Doctoral Degree		*	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
		Doctoral Degree (Professional)			
9		Master's Degree		*	
		Master's Degree (Professional)			
8		Bachelor Honours Degree		Occupational Certificate (Level 8)	
		Postgraduate Diploma			
		Bachelor's Degree			
7		Bachelor's Degree		Occupational Certificate (Level 7)	
	Advanced Diploma				
6		Diploma		Occupational Certificate (Level 6)	
		Advanced Certificate			
5		Higher Certificate		Occupational Certificate (Level 5)	
4	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework	National Certificate		Occupational Certificate (Level 4)	
3		Intermediate Certificate		Occupational Certificate (Level 3)	
2		Elementary Certificate		Occupational Certificate (Level 2)	
1		General Certificate		Occupational Certificate (Level 1)	

*Qualification types beyond level 8 on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) have not been determined.

The NQF brings together three Qualifications Sub-Frameworks, namely, the:

- General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF);
- Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF); and

- Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF).

These three Sub-Frameworks are interdependent and enable learners to move from one Sub-Framework to the other with ease.

What does the NQF do?

As has been mentioned above, the NQF is like a map or guide that enables learners to chart their education and training path. For example, schooling in South Africa begins under the umbrella of General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework or what is better known as Basic Education. At the end of Grade 9, a learner can either take the vocational route and go to a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College or remain within the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework and read towards a National Senior Certificate at NQF Level 4.

Similarly, a learner who takes the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework route will get a National Certificate (Vocational) also pegged at NQF Level 4. These learners can continue to higher education or obtain other higher occupational qualifications. They can also move across the Sub-Frameworks. The NQF was created to ensure that all this is possible without learners reaching 'dead-ends' in their education and training.

What is the NLRD?

The NLRD is the electronic information management system of the South African NQF. It is maintained by the South African National Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which is the statutory body responsible for further developing and implementing the NQF to ensure that the South African education and training system is world class. The NLRD enables SAQA to manage the NQF and also report accurately on aspects of the education and training system in South Africa.

What are the main functions of the NLRD?

The NLRD provides:

- Policy makers with comprehensive information to enable evidenced-based decision-making and policy planning;
- Types of qualifications required and over-supply of qualifications;

- Learners and employers with proof of qualifications obtained; and
- Information that assists with career development and advice.

What are the highlights of the NLRD?

The NLRD:

- Is the first such information management system in the world and has been in operation since November 1999;
- Has enabled SAQA to assist other countries including the United Arab Emirates and Namibia in developing information management systems for their qualifications frameworks; and
- Has enabled SAQA to produce trends reports on the South African education and training system.

What information is on the NLRD?

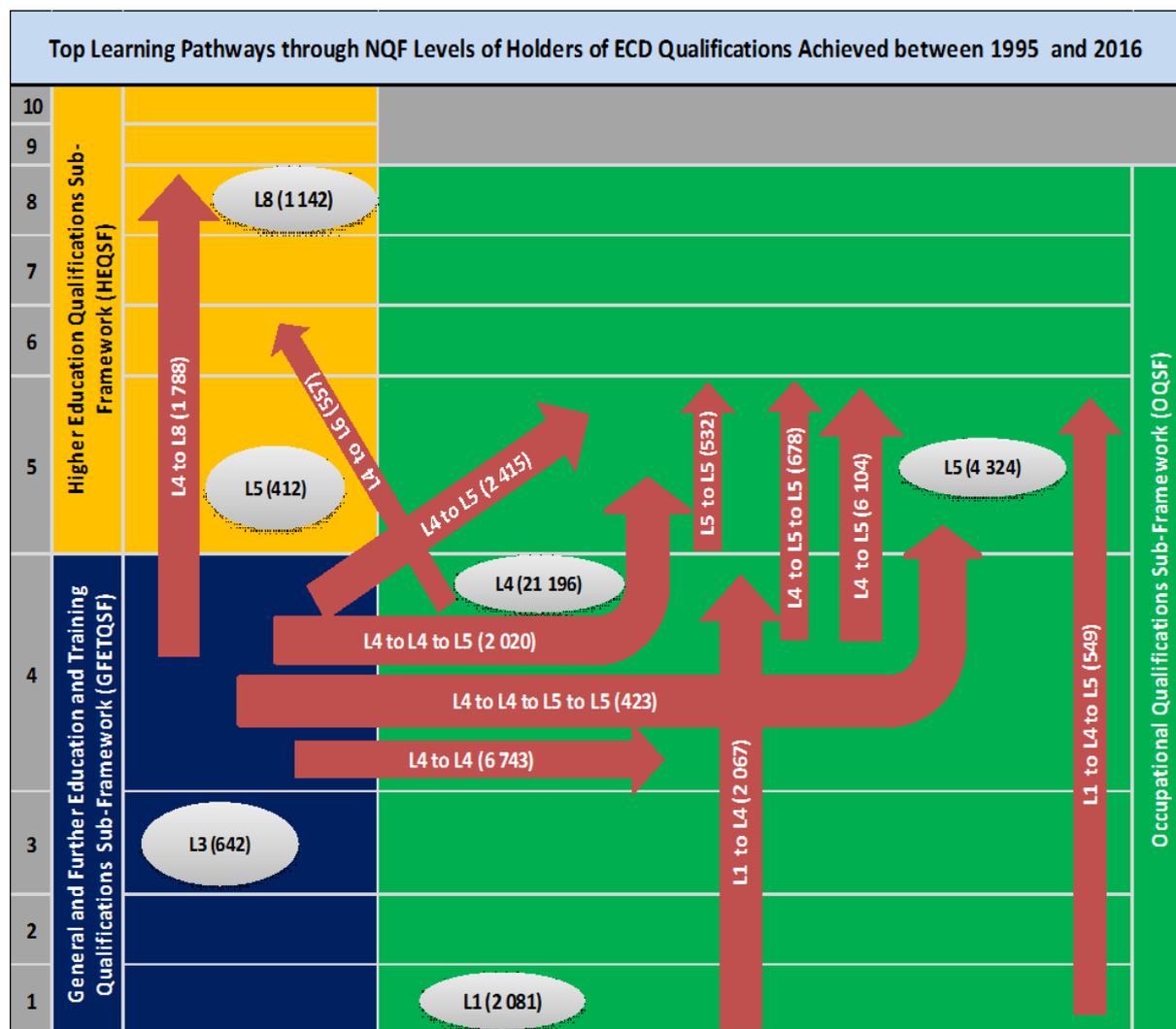
The information on the NLRD is not static as more information keeps on being added to it. However, as at 30 September 2017, the NLRD had the following information:

Number of people (Learners <u>and</u> those with Professional Designations <u>and</u> registered Assessors)	18 052 595
Number of people who are Learners	17 852 717
Number of people with Professional Designations	299 871
Total Qualification Achievements	14 370 038
Total Qualification Achievements via RPL	32 444
Accredited providers for qualifications	4 205
Qualifications currently registered on the NQF	11 294
Unit Standards currently registered on the NQF	11 492
Professional Bodies currently recognised on the NQF	99
Professional Designations currently registered on the NQF	359

How does the NLRD show movement within the NQF?

One of the reasons for establishing the South African NQF was to facilitate movement of learners within education, training and career paths. In other words, the NQF was established in part to enable the connection between qualifications to allow for movement of learners through the formal education and training system and its linkages with the world of work. With the NQF, learners should be able to move within and across Sub-Frameworks from the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework to the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework or across to the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework and vice versa.

For example, the diagram below shows movement of learners within the ECD sector. This was revealed in the 4th Trends Report that was published by SAQA in March 2017. The report can be ordered: [here](#).



The diagram shows movement of learners horizontally, vertically and diagonally across the NQF. For instance, 6 743 learners moved horizontally from NQF Level 4 on the GFETQSF to NQF Level 4 on the OQSF, while 1 788 learners moved vertically from NQF Level 4 on the GFETQSF to NQF Level 8 on the HEQSF and 2 415 learners moved diagonally from NQF Level 4 on the GFETQSF to NQF Level 5 on the OQSF. Such movement could only be made possible by the NQF.

What is the value of the trends reports?

With the information from the NLRD, SAQA has produced four Trends Reports:

- 1) Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa 1992 to 2001 (published in 2004);
- 2) Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa 1995 to 2004 (published in 2007);
- 3) Work-Related Qualifications and Part-Qualifications registered on the NQF: Trends 2002 to 2011 (published in 2013); and
- 4) Pathway Trends: Qualifications Awarded and Learners' Movement across the South African Education and Training System, 1995 to 2014 (published in 2017).

These trends reports provide information that is very useful for decision making and career advice. SAQA encourages researchers in education and training to use the data-mining already done by SAQA as a springboard for conducting further qualitative research to find the reasons behind the trends.

How can the information on the NLRD be of assistance?

One way of making use of the NLRD is to partner with SAQA and explore trends in an area of interest. For example, the Financial Planning Institute of Southern Africa (FPI) partnered with SAQA to produce a report on *Learning Pathways followed by Financial Planners and Financial Advisors*. The report reveals that while there is a standard learning pathway towards becoming a professional financial planner or financial advisor, this path is not taken by many as only 30% of the FPI's members are designated.

Further, the report indicates that while the majority of FPI members (61%) have qualifications in Business, Commerce or Management Studies, 19% have a qualification in Nursing. This is not surprising as nursing is relevant to health and medical underwriting in the life insurance industry, but it demonstrates that individuals move across different

occupations within the financial services sector. These are some of the findings that can benefit the sector and could only be revealed through analysing data from the NLRD.