

## NQF Impact Study

In 1999, SAQA first mooted the idea of reviewing progress in the development and implementation of the NQF. The aim of such a study was to measure the impact of the NQF on the transformation of education and training in South Africa. In September 2002, the NQF Impact Study commenced formally. It became evident that the effective measurement of the NQF could only be achieved over an expanded period of time and a longitudinal study, conducted in several cycles was envisaged. The SAQA research team supported by Irish and Scottish NQF experts developed and piloted the research design. In March 2004, the first cycle of the Study was completed, and by September, the findings were published as *Cycle 1: Establishing criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF*.

Many commentators hailed the results of the pilot study as a world first and it was favourably accepted by the education and training community. Some of those who participated in the launch of the report commented as follows:

*The decision to conduct an Impact Study was highly significant. It constituted a confident and mature undertaking on the part of SAQA. It is a landmark study not only in South Africa but also in the international context. It is the first time an open-ended and transparent rolling plan for review of a national qualifications system has been developed at a national level.* (Professor Gary Granville, National College of Art and Design, Dublin).

*The NQF presents to South Africa what is arguably the most cogent and progressive set of ideas for transforming the education and training system. These core ideas have mobilised and inspired millions, and offered hope to those long excluded from this system. Those entrusted with this national project have taken the bold step of shining a bright and honest light on the achievements of the NQF. More than anything else, it is this courage of introspection and integrity of leadership that might well secure for the NQF a continuing and central role in the transformation of education and training for many decades to come.* (Professor Jonathan Jansen, University of Pretoria).

*South Africa has gradually matured from the process of policy formulation and has begun the process of policy implementation. During the next five years we will have to grapple much more with the notion of policy impact, and thus the NQF Impact Study is timely in this regard.* (Mr Botshabelo Maja, Department of Labour).

The first cycle of the NQF Impact Study focused mainly on the development of criteria to be used in future cycles. Finally, after piloting and analysing an extensive pool of potential criteria (or 'Impact Indicators'), a suite of 17 Impact Indicators was accepted. The five NQF objectives were too broad and general for use as Impact Indicators but they formed an important point of reference throughout the process.



NQF Impact Study team  
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NQF Impact Study Report

The table below lists the final suite of Impact Indicators:

Impact Indicator	Description	
<b>Set 1: The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and the South African society</b>		
1.	Number of qualifications	The number of NQF-registered qualifications
2.	Effectiveness of qualifications design	The contribution that qualifications design makes to ease of access, mobility and progress for learners
3.	Portability of qualifications	The extent to which qualifications facilitate the mobility of learners horizontally, diagonally and vertically
4.	Relevance of qualifications	The relevance of qualifications in relation to the needs of the workplace, industry and society at large, including 'non-traditional' qualifications (qualifications offered in new and emerging fields of learning)
5.	Qualifications uptake and achievement	The extent to which NQF-registered qualifications are offered and the attainment of such qualifications by learners
6.	Integrative approach	The extent to which qualifications promote an integrative approach to education and training and the nature of such qualifications
<b>Set 2: The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addresses the education and training needs of learners and the South African society</b>		
7.	Equity of access	The ease of entry and access of traditional and non-traditional learners to education and training, including admission requirements and the recognition of prior learning
8.	Redress practices	The extent to which redress practices, including the recognition of prior learning, facilitate the award of credits and/or access of learners to learning programmes
9.	Nature of learning programmes	The expansion of learning opportunities and the impact of learning programmes, including an outcomes-based approach to both curriculum development and learning and teaching
10.	Quality of learning and teaching	The extent to which learning and teaching practices are responsive to the needs of learners through improved teaching practices
11.	Assessment practices	The fairness, validity, reliability and practicability of the assessment of learning
12.	Career and learning pathing	The extent to which learning programmes support and enhance career and learning pathing
<b>Set 3: The extent to which quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training</b>		
13.	Number of registered assessors and moderators	The number of skilled assessors and moderators required to support an effective education and training system
14.	Number of accredited providers	The number of education and training providers who meet the quality requirements of the system
15.	Quality assurance practices	The extent to which quality assurance practices enhance the quality of learning, teaching and assessment
<b>Set 4: The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture</b>		
16.	Organisational, economic and societal benefits	The extent to which learner-centredness is embedded in organisational, economic and social environments in order to build a lifelong learning culture that empowers individuals and communities
17.	Contribution to other national strategies	The extent to which the implementation of the NQF supports and contributes to the achievement of national strategies such as the Human Resource Development Strategy, National Skills Development Strategy and Tirisano

The main outcome of the NQF Impact Study Cycle 1 was the development of the Impact Indicators. This represents an important step towards improved NQF implementation and contributes towards building a learning nation. Up to now, no other country has been able to shine consistently 'a bright and honest light on the achievements' of its NQF. We hope that the South African example will inform similar initiatives in other parts of the world.

Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study kicked off in September 2004 and the Cycle 2 Report will be launched in June 2005. The methods developed during Cycle 1 will be applied to Cycle 2 to establish a baseline against which future findings can be compared.

## SAQA Bulletin

During 2004, three issues were published: Volume 5 Number 1, July 2004; Volume 6 Number 1, September 2004 and Volume 6 Number 2, November 2004.

- The July 2004 issue contained five papers on different aspects of NQF development and implementation. It included the following: a discussion on the systemic changes and the need to build a world-class education and training system; two commissioned papers focusing on the NQF review process; an overview of the South African transition from the previous unbalanced educational practices; and models for the assessment and recognition of prior learning.
- The September 2004 issue was entitled *The Impact of the National Qualifications Framework after ten years of democracy*. It contained one paper by Gary Granville, the project leader of the NQF Impact Study Cycle 1 in which he reflects on the idea of an Impact Study while presenting a useful overview of the research process of Cycle 1.
- The November issue was entitled *Thinking and Doing Education and Training Anew*. It contained seven papers delivered in September 2004 at the Qualification Africa Conference held at Gallagher Estate. The papers discussed the relevance of the NQF Impact Study to SADC; exploring the issues impacting on implementation of an integrated framework; assessment strategies; and embedded knowledge. Three papers responding to Gary Granville's discussion in Volume 6 Number 1 on the NQF Impact Study were also included.

## SAQA, the NQF and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment

During 2004-2005, SAQA became increasingly involved in guiding education and training providers in improving their Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) ratings. In 2004, SAQA published the *Guidelines on Equitable Accreditation of Small-, Medium- and Micro Enterprise Providers of Education and Training* and arising from the interest in the Guidelines, SMMEs, particularly those offering education and training, should focus on skills development.

SAQA's standpoint is based not only on evidence of common agreement in education and training legislation but also on the BEE Act, which states that redress can be achieved through skills development. SAQA also takes note of the high weighting of skills development in the BEE Balanced Scorecard.

## Credit Accumulation and Transfer System

The NQF is a credit system in which qualifications and unit standards are registered at specific levels of the framework and have credit value. During the past few years, many unit standards and qualifications have been developed, and assigned credit as they are registered on the NQF. However, education and training stakeholders often find it difficult to determine the equivalence of learning attained in different contexts and sectors. A Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) will state explicitly how various forms of learning can be compared by establishing a "common currency" of credit. Over time in the course of their study, learners may accumulate credit towards a particular qualification. The Department of Education's 2004 *Draft Discussion Paper on the Higher Education Qualifications Framework* states that:

*Credit accumulation and transfer is the process whereby a learner's achievements are recognised and contribute to further learning even if the learner has not yet obtained a qualification.*

Credit is therefore a "quantified means of expressing equivalence of learning. It is a way of comparing learning achieved in a variety of different contexts" as defined in the Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer publication of 2005.

In January 2005, SAQA initiated a study of international examples of credit accumulation and transfer systems. The aims of the study were to explore:

- international models for credit accumulation and transfer;
- the extent to which the South African NQF can be considered a credit accumulation and transfer system; and
- the extent to which the NQF could become a "reading grid" (European Commission, 2004) or a qualification credit matrix.

The study was intended to facilitate a process whereby providers and other users of qualifications could assess equivalent learning in comparison with commonly agreed criteria for learners migrating between institutions, bands and sectors – nationally, regionally and internationally.

The benefits of a credit accumulation and transfer system include:

- clear articulation of credits across different sectors of education and training;
- making explicit progress within the system, thereby enhancing lifelong learning; and
- facilitating regional and international comparability of standards and qualifications.

## Guidelines for Integrated Assessment

The National Standards Bodies Regulations of 1998 define integrated assessment as *a form of assessment which permits the learner to demonstrate applied competence and which uses a range of formative and summative assessment methods.*

In the spirit of building a learning nation, the publication *Guidelines for Integrated Assessment* attempts to deepen education and training practitioners' understanding of one of the most important aspects of teaching and learning, namely the assessment of learning. The latter is no longer seen as a mere addition to a learning programme, to be administered at the end of the learning period, but is considered integral to teaching and learning. Its value lies in the extent to which assessment supports learning in the development of understanding, skills, and practice.

This new publication builds and expands on an earlier publication entitled *Criteria and Guidelines for the Assessment of NQF registered Qualifications and Unit standards* (SAQA, 2001). Its particular focus is on the use of integrated assessment approaches in which the application of knowledge is supported.

The *Guidelines for Integrated Assessment* highlights the practice of integrated assessment by:

- assessing a number of outcomes together or;
- assessing a number of assessment criteria together or;
- assessing a number of unit standards together and;
- using a combination of assessment methods and instruments for outcome/s and;
- collecting naturally occurring evidence (such as in a workplace setting); and/or
- acquiring evidence from other sources, such as supervisors' reports, testimonials, portfolios of work previously done, logbooks or journals.

In addition, the point is made that integrated assessment should occur at many different levels and at different stages throughout the course of a learning programme. This means that integrated assessment should be considered a vital part of curriculum development, teaching, and learning processes. Further, it is noted that integrated assessment should be part of integrated learning and that practitioners should consciously seek ways in which the latter can be enhanced.

The audience for this publication is providers/institutions, including work-based training organisations. It proposes approaches to the conceptualisation and development of assessment methodologies that will enable learners to demonstrate applied competence within an outcomes-based education and training model.

Best practice in terms of integrated assessment in outcomes-based education and training includes the principle that assessment should not take place once only, but should be performed regularly to support learning. Therefore integrated assessment approaches should focus on seeking how to assess the integration of theory and practice meaningfully.

The publication proposes guidelines for the development and design of integrated assessment approaches and gives examples of how to put these into practice. The publication is a useful tool in the development of meaningful assessment practice. Above all, it creates a solid foundation on which to build a learning nation.

building a  
learning nation