

SAQA House officially unveiled

By Tumelo Modisane

Stakeholders in education and training gathered at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) premises on the 15th November 2016 to observe SAQA's 20th Birthday and to mark the transition from policy development to policy implementation.

The Chairperson of the SAQA Board, Dr Vuyelwa Toni Penxa, accompanied by members of the Board past and present, SAQA's founding CEO, Dr Samuel Isaacs, as well as the current SAQA CEO, Mr Joe Samuels, officially unveiled SAQA House at this event.

This comes after SAQA's successful completion of its policy development mandate. Speaking at the event, Mr Samuels extended SAQA's gratitude to all who have contributed to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) over the years: "SAQA is where it is today through your contribution, and we've asked you to join us today to show our appreciation and to acknowledge that we are standing on your shoulders – you the giants who came before us."

In 2008, the NQF Act No. 67 was signed into law replacing the SAQA Act No. 58 of 1995. This ended the long period of review of the NQF and also affirmed the need for and importance of the NQF. SAQA then developed policies after consultation with the Quality Councils to ensure the implementation of the NQF Act. The policy development phase was completed in 2015.

SAQA's focus is now on policy implementation. This involves ensuring that there is a common understanding of policies governing education and training in South Africa and that these policies are aligned. SAQA will ensure that policies are aligned and that changes are made where necessary. Mr Samuels also emphasised that the organisation will advocate for the awareness, understanding and valuing of the NQF.

Dr Toni Penxa welcomed guests and thanked previous members of the SAQA Board for ensuring that good governance is upheld in the organisation. "This is shown by the 19 years of unqualified audit reports from the Auditor-General," said Dr Toni Penxa.

Founding CEO of SAQA, Dr Isaacs, held the guests spellbound as he told them about the experience of setting up the Qualifications Authority while the Deputy Director-General at the Department of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nkosinathi Sishi, extended the department's appreciation for SAQA's role in implementing and developing the NQF.

Director-General of Basic Education, Mr Mathanzima Mveli, acknowledged SAQA's involvement in ensuring that the NQF makes for seamless movement between general and further education to higher education. Dr Mafu Rakometsi, CEO of

Umalusi, thanked SAQA for its collegial role in leading the development and implementation of the NQF rather than adopting a 'big brother' approach.

The NQF Act gives SAQA a significant role in ensuring that the post-school education and training system is interconnected and that it enables lifelong learners to have access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths. *The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* also calls for the simplification of the NQF and better articulation of qualifications. This informs SAQA's policy implementation phase, concluded Mr Samuels.