CHAPTER FOUR: BASELINE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the research undertaken for the second cycle of the Study, which was carried out in the period July 2004 to February 2005. The aim of the second cycle was to establish a baseline against which to measure the progress of the NQF.

The following stakeholder groupings were included in interviews, focus groups and a national survey (refer to Table 3 in Chapter 2 for a detailed breakdown of the sample):

- providers of education and training (GET/FET/HET, public/private, large/SMME, workplace-based/not-workplace-based);
- employers (large/SMME, levy payers/non-levy payers);
- organised labour (education and other);
- Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (including professional bodies);
- standards setting bodies (NSBs and SGBs);
- government departments (mainly Education and Labour);
- learners (from a range of providers); and
- employees (from a range of employers).

The baseline findings are ordered according to the 17 Impact Indicators developed during Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study (see Table 1 on page 17). A quantitative summary of the combined responses from the SAQA administered questionnaires (summarised in Annexure 1) and the survey responses (Annexure 8) are given. In cases where there were significant differences between the two sets of responses comments are included. The quantitative summary is then discussed in more detail with supporting evidence from the qualitative analysis of the interviews (Annexures 2-6), the quantitative overview of data on the NLRD (Annexure 7) and the qualitative analysis of qualifications on the NLRD (included in Annexure 8). The summary per Impact Indicator is concluded with a judgment on the level of impact of the indicator. Four levels of impact are used (as described in Chapter 2):

HP: High positive impact	The research evidence shows a marked positive change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF
M: Moderate impact	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
MM: Minimal/mixed impact	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
N: Negative impact	The research evidence shows a marked negative change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF

It is important to note that the level of impact is suggested for the overall Impact Indicator, and not for specific questions that are part of the set. Although the set may contain the whole spectrum, i.e. a low rating per question, a moderate rating per question and a high rating per question, the judgment is made based on the *balance* of the findings.

Baseline findings of the NQF Impact Study

As explained in Chapter 2, the empirical findings of the second Cycle of the NQF Impact Study are sourced[13] mainly from:

- Stakeholder interviews and focus groups conducted by SAQA - Annexures 1 to 6;
- Quantitative and qualitative analyses of qualifications on the NLRD conducted by SAQA and an external agency - Annexures 7 and 8;
- A national survey that included 623 respondents across all nine provinces in a variety of sectors, also conducted by an external agency - Annexure 8.

The following format, categorised per Impact Indicator, is followed:

- Tabular overview of responses to the national survey (not all Impact Indicators were included in the survey);
- Comments on the responses, including qualitative support from interviews and NLRD analyses; and
- Rating of the level of impact.

In addition to the findings presented according to the Impact Indicators a number of overarching issues were also identified. These are not discussed in this chapter but are captured in Appendix 5 as aspects that require further research. Examples include:

- Difficulties around the matriculation certificate, particularly with regard to RPL;
- Misconceptions around skills levy claims; and
- Quality of registered assessors.

[13] References to the Annexure are maintained throughout. The format (x:y) is used, where x refers to the number of the Annexure, and y the page number in the particular annexure.

Indicator 1: Number of qualifications

The number of NQF registered qualifications

No questions directly related to *Number of qualifications* were asked in the survey.

The following overview of NQF qualifications and unit standards is included as background:

A *qualification* is "a planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose or purposes, including applied competence and a basis for further learning" (SAQA, 2000b:8). Current regulations stipulate that a qualification may lead to a total of 120 or more credits on the NQF.

A *unit standard* is made up of "registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria, describing the quality of the expected performance" (SAQA, 2000b:8). Unit standards are always based on specific outcomes and associated assessment criteria.

There are two *classes of qualification* on the NQF:

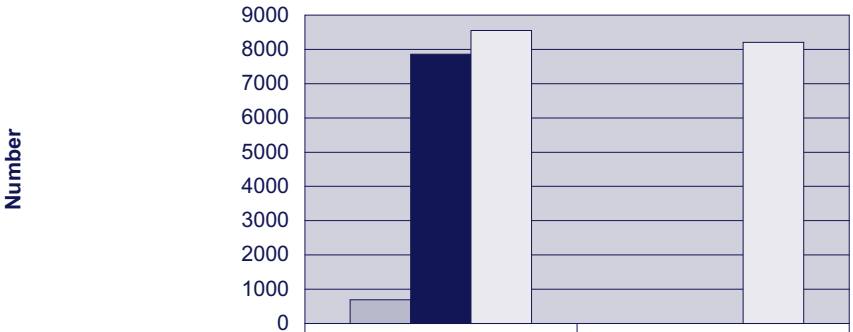
Unit standard-based qualifications: Qualifications that are made up of a specific grouping of unit standards so that specific rules of combination for a qualification can be adhered to - this refers mainly to the fundamental, core and elective components of the qualification. These qualifications also have their own sets of outcomes and assessment criteria, but are characterised by the matrix of unit standards that are attached to them.

Non-unit standard-based qualifications: These are qualifications that specify only the exit level outcomes and assessment criteria (ELOAC) and are not made up of distinct unit standards. These qualifications are described by broad exit level outcomes and assessment criteria to ensure that a planned combination of learning outcomes is presented.[14]

Qualifications that existed prior to NQF implementation were registered on an interim basis by providers between July 1998 and June 2003. This process was initiated at the early stage of NQF development mainly in an attempt to accommodate the huge numbers of existing qualifications. It was also an attempt to give existing providers the opportunity to gradually align their qualifications to the NQF requirements, specifically placing the qualifications within an outcomes-based framework. All those qualifications that were previously registered on an interim basis have been fully registered on the NQF until June 2006 and are therefore included in this overview of all registered qualifications. All these "historical" qualifications fall within the non-unit standard-based *class*.

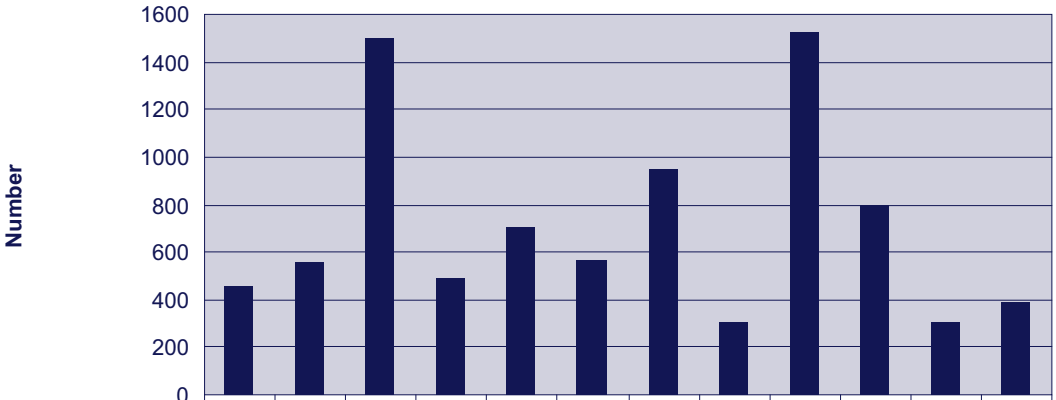
[14] For this reason non-unit standard-based qualifications are also referred to as ELOAC-qualifications.

At the time that this report was compiled (March 2005) there were 8,553 qualifications and 8,208 unit standards registered[15] on the NQF. Of the 8,553 qualifications, 8% (696) were unit standard-based. Graphs 2 to 6 below are graphical representation of these totals.



	Qualifications	Unit standards
Unit-standard-based	696	
Non-unit standard based	7857	
Total	8553	8208

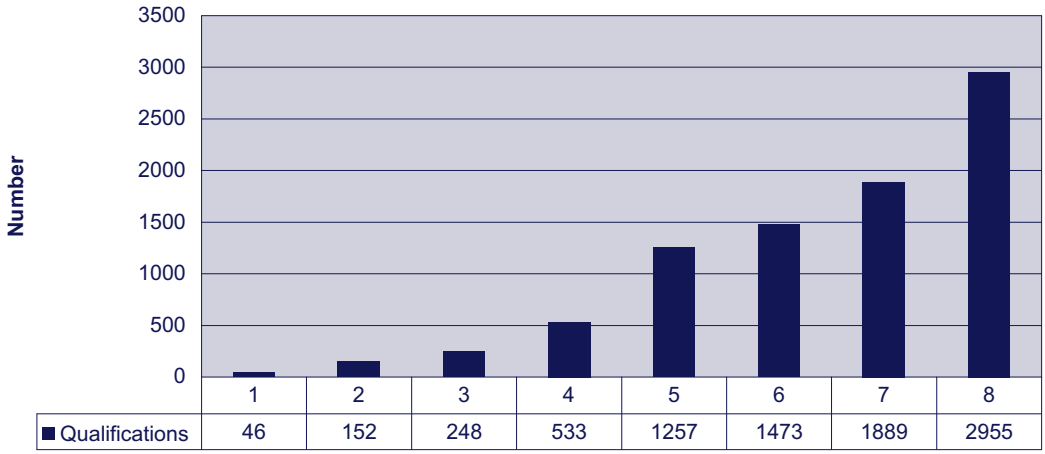
Graph 2: Qualifications and Unit Standards registered on the NQF



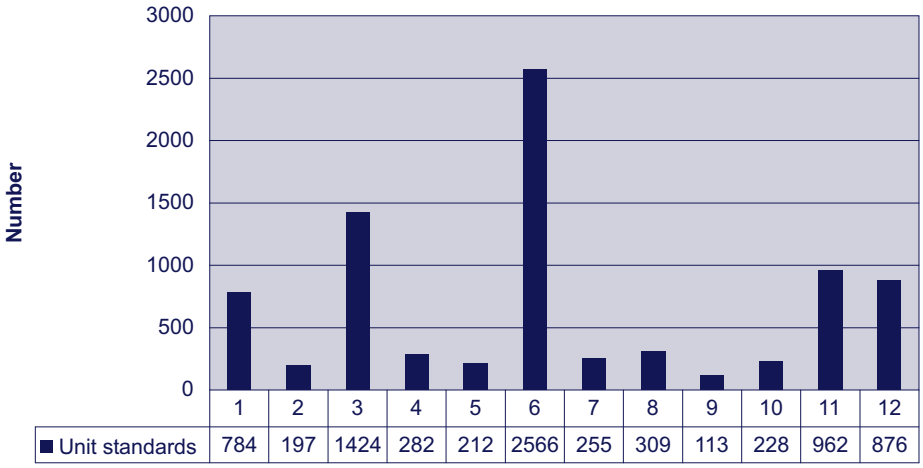
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Qualifications	454	562	1502	488	705	564	952	307	1523	800	304	392

Graph 3: Qualifications by NQF Organising Field[16]

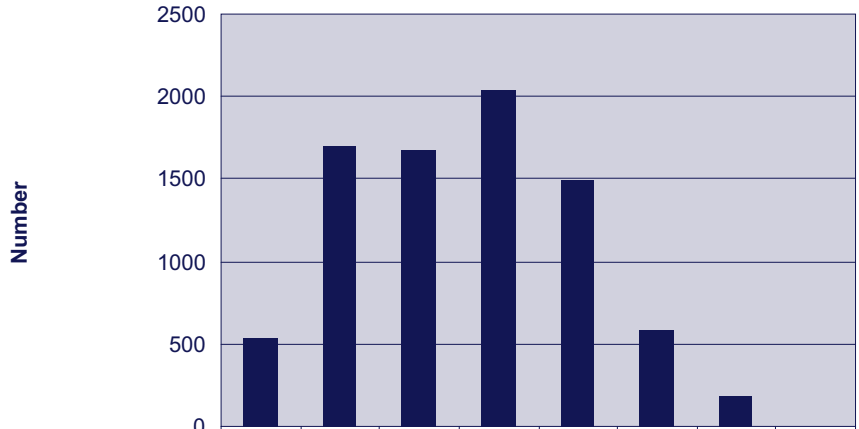
[15] Registration statuses 'Registered', 'Registered capture in progress' and 'Reregistered' were combined. Other registration statuses have been excluded.
[16] There are 12 NQF Organising Fields (also described in Appendix 3):
(1) Agriculture and Nature Conservation
(2) Culture and Arts
(3) Business, Commerce and Management Studies
(4) Communication Studies and Language
(5) Education, Training and Development
(6) Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology
(7) Human and Social Studies
(8) Law, Military Science and Security
(9) Health Sciences and Social Services
(10) Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences
(11) Services
(12) Physical Planning and Construction.



Graph 4: Qualifications by NQF Level



Graph 5: Unit Standards by NQF Organising Field



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Unit Standards	532	1696	1678	2044	1498	582	178	0

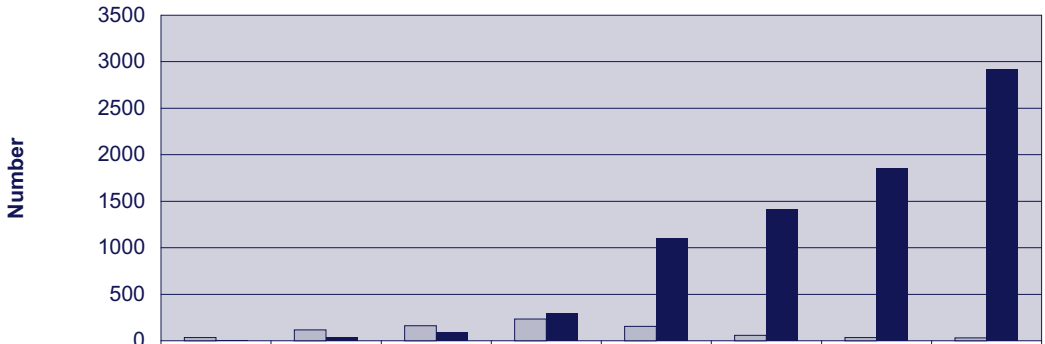
Graph 6: Unit standards by NQF Level

During the interviews respondents noted that the "new" NQF qualifications are considered to be broader than the old technical college qualifications (4:20) and the scope of qualifications becoming available is positive (4:21). More qualifications are also becoming available in new and emerging (non-traditional) fields of learning (4:21).

A departmental official raised the issue of the need for an "audit" to determine which qualifications are available:

> Once we know what the country needs at a higher level, you must take that need and check what is available on the NQF. Such a process must take place up to the point where we say, "But we still sit with these areas where there are no qualifications." It is difficult to say yes, or no, it is not enough. Maybe we are sitting with all of them (3:8).

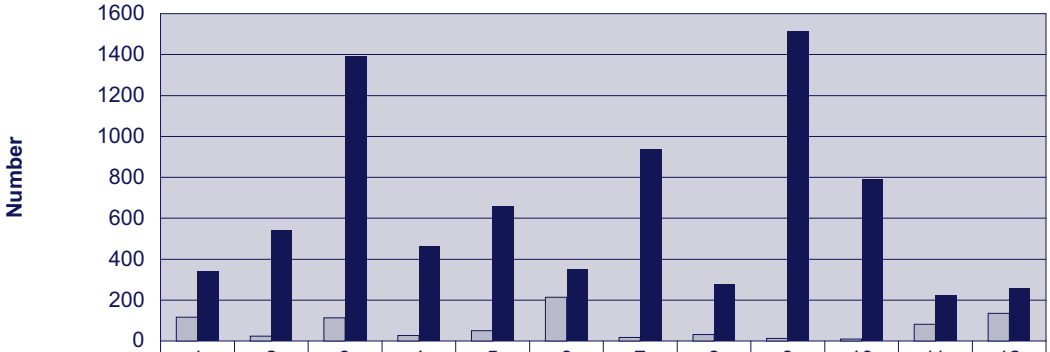
A comparison between the "historical" qualifications (developed by providers) and "new" qualifications developed after the NQF was established shows a significant increase in qualifications available at NQF Levels 3, 4 and 5, even though the numbers are still relatively low. This is illustrated in the graph below.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
New	34	118	160	235	154	60	36	32
Historical	12	34	88	298	1103	1413	1853	2923

Graph 7: Comparison between "historical" and "new" qualifications by NQF Level

A similar comparison between the "historical" and "new" qualifications by NQF Organising Field shows highest activity in Organising Field 6 (Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology) for the "new" qualifications, whereas Organising Fields 3 (Business, Commerce and Management Studies) and 9 (Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences) were highest for the "historical" qualifications. This is illustrated in the graph below.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
New	116	23	113	26	50	213	18	32	13	9	81	135
Historical	338	539	1389	462	655	351	934	275	1510	791	223	257

Graph 8: Comparison between "historical" and "new" qualifications by NQF Organising Field

Level of impact

Moderate impact	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system

The evidence presented on this first Impact Indicator, *Number of qualifications*, suggests that the level of impact is moderate. The shift in the development of qualifications to NQF Levels 3, 4 and 5 (Graph 6), the registration of all provider-based qualifications on the NQF and the significant development of new unit standards all contribute to a marked positive change. On the other hand, the large number of "historical qualifications" (7,454) currently registered on the NQF still requires considerable attention. Although all these qualifications were submitted in an outcomes-based format, many require redesign that extends beyond compliance.

Indicator 2: Effectiveness of qualification design

The contribution that qualifications design makes to ease of access, mobility and progression of learners

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't know/ Too soon to say
The design of NQF qualifications contributes to the improved *access* of learners to further and higher education and training institutions	6,7%	75,6%	17,7%
The implementation of the NQF has enabled learners and employees to gain access to further and higher education and training *regardless of race, gender or disability*	10,0%	71,5%	18,5%
Employees who have completed, or are in the process of completing, NQF qualifications, *progress* well in the organisational environment	8,6%	56,2%	35,2%
NQF designed qualifications are a significant factor when considering *employment*	11,8%	67,4%	20,8%
NQF quality assurance practices ensure that qualifications are based on *nationally agreed standards*	7,9%	76,6%	15,4%
Standards setting arrangements ensure that are *qualifications are fit-for-purpose*	7,6%	73,7%	18,7%
NQF qualifications increase the mobility of employees - thus *decrease the stability of the workforce* in an organisation	22,1%	53,1%	24,8%
There has been *upward mobility* within the organisation as a result of improved qualifications through the establisment of the NQF	15,4%	50,8%	33,9%

Table 8: Survey responses for Indicator 2

Most respondents (75,6%) agreed that the design of NQF qualifications could contribute to improved access to further and higher education institutions. Even so, very limited evidence of relevant examples was presented during the interviews. Respondents tended to conflate issues related to qualification design with broader overarching aspects such as quality assurance and progression within the workplace.

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, the design of qualifications do seem to enhance access by providing flexible entry and progression pathways. Access to the National Certificate in the Supervision of Civil Engineering Construction, for example, allows for the following categories of learners to enrol:

- Learners who have attended short courses or completed basic education at FET or ABET level 4
- Learners that are employed and have acquired skills and knowledge
- Learners that have participated in skills programmes
- Learners that have completed portions of a formal course and have dropped out due to financial reasons (8: 25)

This feature was consistent across all three sectors analysed (8:23 - 60).

Some respondents were of the opinion that non-unit standard-based qualifications were more useable than unit standard-based qualifications (2:10). An ETQA manager noted:

> I know a lot of the other ETQAs don't like provider-linked qualifications. I personally love them. I think it is fantastic, because you can then really do benchmarking in terms of syllabi content and entrance of outcome content and learner competency content.

There still seems to be a divide between unit standard-based and non-unit standard-based qualifications (2:10). Formal, discipline-based qualifications still seem to be considered more important than workplace-based and other qualifications (3:9). An ETQA noted, for example:

> [It is not] that [qualifications] are not practical enough but that there is a divide between the …university-type standard and ours which, quite frankly, is only now starting to be developed by the universities and technikons (2:10).

There was a mixed reaction to the extent to which qualifications are considered a significant factor for employment. Comments such as 'we are not there yet' (6:9) and 'we are beginning to see many adverts' (3:9) were common. Although it was noted that progress in the workplace is not dependent only on NQF qualifications (3:9), some responses were very positive (3:9) and showed general acceptance of the value of qualifications in the workplace.

Likewise, the 'upward mobility' of employees in organisations, is not yet evident - over a third (33,9%) of respondents indicated that they don't know, or that it is still too soon to say.

The value of combining theory and practice in qualifications was noted by many respondents. Concern was expressed about the extent to which qualifications, particularly the matric certificate, exclude a practical component and are therefore unable to prepare the learner for the workplace. It was noted that, as a result of this, many people with matriculation certificates are unemployed:

> …you would find in most cases it's because they don't have the necessary skills to enter the labour market (4:11).

Conflicting comments were made about nationally agreed standards and standard setting arrangements. There is strong support for the principle of standard setting (76,6% and 73,7% respectively) and there is evidence that the principles of stakeholder involvement through representation on Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and a call for public comment before standards are registered, are perceived to enhance the relevance of qualifications (8:23). Unit standards seem to be considered valuable in drafting courses for the workplace (4:10) and the guidelines for the format of qualifications are found useful in the reconfiguration of old programmes (4:17), but some fundamental unit standards, particularly at NQF level 1, are considered to be pitched too high, while other unit standards are seen to be over-specific (reductionist).

General comments on the effectiveness of qualification design included:

- qualifications enable employees to progress in an organisation (3:9)
- qualifications can be used to determine what skills people have, or should have (3:9)
- access is not improved by the design of the qualification but through implementation by the provider (4:8)
- some higher education qualifications are not relevant (4:12)

Responses tended to focus on specific problems related to qualifications. Examples include:

- proposed positioning of SGBs under SETAs is considered problematic (2:8)
- short courses need to be aligned (6:7)
- discipline-based qualifications are considered more important (3:16)

Level of impact

Minimal/mixed impact	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system

The evidence presented on this Impact Indicator, *Effectiveness of qualification design*, suggests that the level of impact is minimal/mixed.

Conflicting responses on aspects such as the significance of qualifications for employment and a range of related problems contribute to this rating. The many general comments, with few concrete examples, also point towards the fact that respondents had difficulty in answering these questions, and therefore also had difficulty in isolating qualification design issues. It is acknowledged that few people are directly involved in curriculum development and that more SGB/NSB responses could have been included.

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this indicator was useful in determining the extent to which qualifications design supports the broader principles of the NQF.

From the evidence it is also possible that this Impact Indicator is too broad as it overlapped significantly with other indicators. It is recommended that it be modified to focus more on the effect of qualification design *on learning programme design* in future cycles (refer to the list of methodological findings presented in Chapter 2).

Indicator 3: Portability of Qualifications

The extent to which qualifications facilitate the mobility of learners horizontally, diagonally and vertically

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/Strongly agree	Don't know/ Too soon to say
Learners know about qualifications that follow or articulate with NQF qualifications	33,1%	39,3%	27,6%
Learners with NQF qualifications are able to move between vocational, professional and academic streams	11,1%	60,5%	28,1%
NQF qualifications offered by some institutions are seen as more portable than NQF qualifications offered by others	12,3%	48,6%	39,1%
NQF qualifications are seen as more portable than non - NQF qualifications	13,3%	52,0%	34,8%
Recognition (credit transfer) is given for incomplete NQF qualifications when learners move from one institution to another	12,9%	45,9%	41,2%

Table 9: Survey responses for Indicator 3

Almost two thirds of respondents (60,5%) thought that NQF qualifications encouraged educational mobility (the ability to move between streams) and were more portable than non-NQF qualifications. Slightly less than half (48,6%) believed that the institution attended affected portability. However, more than a third of respondents (39,1%) were as yet undecided on these questions.

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this perception was confirmed. Mobility, particularly within the three sectors, seems to be enhanced by the articulation possibilities created within a suite of qualifications. Articulation is facilitated by common unit standards in the fundamental and core components of qualifications (8:60).

In addition, portability and credit transfer are possible across fields and sectors due to the generic nature of parts of the qualifications (8:60). In the Mining and Minerals sector analysis, for example, with the exception of Jewellery qualifications, most of the qualifications analysed enable mobility to other sectors, thereby improving career opportunities and career pathways (8:47).

There was a tendency for respondents to believe that learners did not know about progression routes into or out of NQF qualifications. Less than half the sample (45,9%) thought there was recognition of incomplete NQF qualifications, although almost an equal proportion (41,2%) did not know or felt it was too soon to say.

The interviews provided little evidence on learners' knowledge about qualifications apart from a comment that trainees did not really understand certification and were simply interested in the training (3:12).

Other interview responses treated the issues of moving between streams, portability and credit transfer holistically. Little elaboration was offered to support the belief that learners could move between streams and few actual examples of portability were offered. There were many comments to support the survey finding that qualifications from some institutions were more portable than others (see the responses below on beliefs about the quality of institutions).

The responses in the survey interviews focused on the barriers to achieving portability. The two most important barriers were:

- Beliefs about the quality of institutions or education sectors
- Institutional practices

Many respondents pointed to the unwillingness of certain sectors of education or training to trust the qualifications gained in other sectors. Universities did not accept technikon qualifications (4:12) according to one provider, although an employer (6:9) said there was evidence of vertical progression from technikons to universities. Technikons were said not to accept private provider qualifications (2:16). Academic qualifications were viewed as superior to training qualifications (4:13). One respondent thought that while progression from FET level 4 to diploma level 5 was possible, progression from an FET college to a university was much less likely (4:18).

There was a perception that there are disparities of esteem within educational sectors, such as the problem of historically disadvantaged institutions (4:19) and that rural universities were of lower status than urban universities (3:10).

There was also a more general problem stemming from perceptions of the quality of individual institutions (3:10). Not surprisingly, some universities were seen to have higher status than others (4:17 and 6:9). It was also stated that students might have fears about 'fly by night' private training providers (4:17).

Several system features and practices were seen to inhibit portability. Some respondents said that providers did not talk enough to one another. One thought that the system worked despite this lack of communication (2:16) while others thought this was a serious problem. Other inhibiting factors were said to be:

- The drive for profit by educational institutions - this creates a reluctance to recognise more credits as this would mean a shorter period of time at the receiving institution (3:10)
- The 50% residency clause that inhibited transfer of credits between institutions for more than 50% of credits already attained at the first institution (3:10)
- Modular versus semester systems (3:10)
- The practice of re-assessing students on entry (4:16)
- Differences in syllabus content or length of study (4:16)
- Continuing limitations of portability of qualifications between universities (4:13)

Respondents referred to these problems of trust in other institutions' quality, parity of esteem and institutional practices, without elaborating on them.

It should also be noted that for this indicator, in particular, across all the questionnaire questions, there is a high number of respondents indicating 'don't know', or 'too soon to say' (between 26,5% and 45,4%).

Level of impact

Minimal/mixed impact	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system

Minimal impact has so far been achieved for the *Portability of qualifications*. The questionnaire returns suggest that respondents were fairly equivocal about the level of progress and the interviews threw up few concrete examples of portability. The Cycle 1 Report (SAQA, 2004) had an indicative finding that portability might be a problem area. This indicative finding may now be regarded as confirmed.

Indicator 4: Relevance of qualifications

The relevance of qualifications in relation to the needs of workplace, industry and society at large including 'non-traditional' qualifications (qualifications offered in new and emerging fields of learning)

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't Know/ Too soon to say
Employees who have completed, or are in the process of completing, NQF qualifications acquire learning that is relevant to the workplace	4,5%	77,4%	18,1%
Relevant workplace related NQF qualifications are widely available	21,8%	51,8%	26,4%
Learnerships are addressing the skills shortage in the country	12,4%	69,2%	18,4%
NQF-aligned skills programmes are addressing the skills shortage in the country	9,5%	69,0%	21,5%
NQF qualifications are offered in new and emerging fields of learning	6,7%	66,4%	26,9%
Existing NQF qualifications are changed in response to the needs of the workplace, industry and society	9,2%	63,4%	27,4%

New NQF qualifications are being introduced in response to the needs of the workplace, industry and society	8,1%	65,2%	26,7%
NQF qualifications are internationally recognised and accepted	8,0%	51,0%	41,0%
NQF qualifications enable learners to actively participate in society	5,8%	72,3%	21,9%

Table 10: Survey responses for Indicator 4

The majority of respondents (77,4%) thought that NQF qualifications are very relevant. One respondent indicated that 'qualifications are the only measurable factor that we could consider before we employ someone' (3:13). Workplace-based qualifications, in particular, are considered responsive to the needs of employers and learners and may consequently lead to employment (4:22). Employers felt that NQF qualifications enable learners to put theory into practice (6:11).

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this perception was again confirmed. Across all three sectors, responsiveness and relevance to the needs of workplaces was particularly evident (8:23 - 60).

While support was noted for newly developed higher education qualifications (3:15) and for career-oriented qualifications (as offered by universities of technology) (4:22), qualifications offered by universities were often criticized as not being responsive to the needs of the market and society (4:21; 4:22). A public higher education institution for example noted that they had received comments that 'the graduates you are producing are not ready for work' (4:22) and that 'degrees are not found to be applicable directly to the market' (4:23). University qualifications therefore do not seem to 'correspond to the challenges' of industry and workplaces (4:23).

School qualifications and teacher qualifications in particular, were mentioned as being outdated and not preparing graduates adequately for work (4:22; 4:23).

Public higher education institutions felt frustrated by the requirements of the Department of Education in terms of the registration of new qualifications and their lack of involvement with learnerships (4:22) or other viable workplace-related education and training such as internships and workplace assessment (3:14).

Two thirds of the respondents (66,4%) felt that the non-traditional qualifications were increasingly available and indicated that they believed these qualifications were being developed in response to the needs of the workplace, industry and society (65,2%). In addition, almost two thirds of respondents (63,4%) indicated that existing qualifications were currently undergoing substantial reformatting in response to these needs. However, just more than half of the respondents (51,8%) were satisfied with the availability of such qualifications.

More than two thirds of respondents indicated that they believe that learnerships and skills programmes were addressing the skills shortages in the country (69,2% and 69,0% respectively). Employers consider learnerships particularly relevant (6:10). In addition, new NQF qualifications are considered to be broader than old technical college qualifications, encompassing more knowledge and skills than previously required (4:20). The holistic nature of qualifications also became evident through the analysis of the NQF registered qualifications (8:23 - 60). In the National Certificate in Construction Plastering, for example, the qualification addresses knowledge, skills and competencies required in the construction industry, but also includes management and entrepreneurial skills and enables the learner to become a member of the professional community of the sector (8:41).

In addition, many of the qualifications analysed in the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, enables learners to build up credits through skills programmes (8:56).

However, a number of respondents noted that there were not enough learnerships (3:13; 5:10; 6:12) and that some learnerships have too narrow a focus (3:13) and therefore might inhibit the transfer of knowledge and skills across contexts. In some cases the learnership levels may be too low and do not seem to match the requirements of the workplace.

While some respondents indicated that more attention should be given to the need for particular skills in a specific region, e.g. engineering, hospitality, tourism and agriculture (3:17), others felt that in some sectors there was a proliferation of qualifications and that the sector should undertake an audit to determine its needs (3:15).

Unit standards are considered valuable in drafting learning programmes for the workplace (4:10) and the generic guidelines for qualifications are found to be useful in the reconfiguration of old provider-based programmes.

In general, perceptions of the international comparability of NQF qualifications is average. Half of the respondents (51,0%) agreed that NQF qualifications were internationally comparable while more than a third (41,0%) said that they did not know or that it was too soon to say. Nevertheless, an ETQA stated that their qualifications were closely aligned with international standards (2:11) and that it was important for them to retain international recognition. A provider noted that new qualifications and unit standards would facilitate international benchmarking (4:24). Another ETQA noted that international recognition depended on the institution where the qualification was obtained (2:12). In some cases, international standards were considered to be more valuable than the qualification, particularly in the Information Technology environment (4:24).

Almost three quarters of respondents (72,3%) indicated that they believe that NQF qualifications enable learners to participate actively in society, while less than a quarter (21,9%) did not know, or thought it was too soon to say.

Other important issues raised include the following:

- The qualification and standard setting processes seem to be creating closer interaction between providers, the ETQAs and SGBs (2:12)
- The department (Labour) in particular is not convinced that employers are overly concerned about skills development - they are more interested in tax rebates (3:9). Candidates in learnership are often seen as 'an extra pair of hands' (4:26). The Departments also believed that some of the learnership requirements were too strenuous and that they were driven by the learnership contract (3:14). They also seem to feel that the uptake of learnerships was not as good as it could be - there were many more 'registered learnerships' than 'active learnerships'
- Short courses were still considered the most viable and cost effective option for the workplace - both for the employer and the learner
- A need was also identified for the establishment of more generic standards and programmes (2:11; 6:11)
- Unit standards are not considered useful if they are developed for small, specialised groups (2:12)

Level of impact

Moderate impact	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system

The evidence presented on this Impact Indicator, *Relevance of qualifications*, suggests that the level of impact is moderate. There is considerable evidence that qualifications are designed and redesigned to be relevant and responsive to the needs to workplaces, industry and society. Negative comments on registration requirements and the proliferation of qualifications in some sectors weigh down the greater portion of supportive comments, placing this Impact Indicator on a moderate, and not high, level.

Indicator 5: Qualifications uptake and achievement

The extent to which NQF registered qualifications are offered and the achievement of such qualifications by learners

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't Know/Too soon to say
The cost of completing NQF qualifications is not a barrier to uptake and achievement	25,6 %	46,6%	27,8%
Providers offer NQF qualifications across all geographical regions within South Africa	20,8%	45,4%	33,8%
NQF qualifications are offered by a wide variety of providers	11,3%	64,9%	23,8%
The majority of new/prospective employees have successfully completed NQF qualifications	24,1%	32,8%	43,1%

Table 11: Survey responses for Indicator 5

Almost half of the survey respondents (46,6%) felt that the cost of completing NQF qualifications was *not* a barrier to uptake and achievement, but almost a third (25,6%) of respondents did not agree and felt that cost *was* a significant barrier to the uptake of NQF qualifications.

Conflicting evidence was received from interviews on costs being a barrier to uptake and achievement. An Education and Training Quality Assurance Body felt that competitiveness between providers contributed to reduced education and training costs for learners (2:14). A Department of Labour official felt that the income levels for the majority of learners was too low in relation to education and training costs:

> I don't think it is too high, income levels are too low…I'm thinking if I'm out there in Khayelitsha, I'd rather use that money [learnership allowances for transport and food] to eat and just live at home (3:17).

Some private providers and employers felt however, that there were increased costs involved in NQF provision, particularly for mentoring and assessment, as well as VAT charges for employers to recover training costs (4: 30-31) Another employer noted that training providers were able to charge as they liked, because there were very few accredited providers (6:12). Additional responses received were that travel costs for learners to the place of training and/or workplace were an inhibiting factor for uptake and achievement, as were the cost of HE qualifications (4:28).

Some public providers felt there were no additional costs for the learner:

> You take learnerships, they get paid to come and study…so it's very cheap for learners (4:27).

Almost half of the respondents (45,4%) felt that there was delivery of NQF qualifications by a wide range of providers. However, almost a quarter of respondents (20,8%) felt that there were not enough accredited providers available in all regions of South Africa, with a third of respondents (33,8%) stating they did not know whether there were sufficient providers in all geographic regions.

Extensive comments from interviews were received on the availability of education and training providers in all geographic regions of South Africa. Some respondents from the Department of Labour and Department of Education felt that providers were limited to metropolitan areas. A trade union commented that:

> You will only find two accredited providers in this province…also in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape (5:10).

A public provider felt that learnerships were difficult to implement in rural areas, due to the paucity of relevant workplaces and education and training infrastructure (4:30).

On the other hand, a few private providers noted that franchising models and networks with other private providers helped them provide NQF qualifications to rurally-based learners (4:30). An employer stated that they worked closely with a SETA, who identified accredited education and training providers for them in different geographic areas.

A third of respondents (32,8%) felt that the majority of new or prospective employees had successfully completed NQF qualifications, with nearly half of the respondents stating that they did not know or felt it was too soon to say (43,1%). A quarter of respondents (24,1%) disagreed with this statement.

An employer corroborated the evidence found in the survey questions, namely that most employees had not completed NQF qualifications:

> We are starting now….busy with re-engineering the previous year, so since then everything has been NQF linked. People are still busy with their portfolio of evidence (6:13).

Another employer raised a concern that large numbers of unemployed learners undertaking workplace based routes to an NQF qualification were dropping out and not completing these qualifications (6:15).

Level of Impact

Minimal/mixed impact	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system

Systemically, most learners have not completed NQF qualifications. This means that the impact is in the pipeline, as it were, rather than in more concrete results. There is evidence of uptake, but it seems that this is mainly in metropolitan areas. While there is considerable evidence of uptake of NQF qualifications, particularly through work-based routes to a qualification, this is confined to urban areas. Rural learners seem to be marginalised from qualifications uptake, and delivery seems to be skewed provincially.

Public colleges seem to think that NQF qualifications promise additional income, whereas new training and assessment requirements have cost implications for private training providers. VAT is also a key issue. Private providers seem to be more responsive to the needs of rural learners and find innovative ways of delivery.

However, most respondents agree that learners are still undergoing education and training and that achievement will only become evident later. While uptake seems encouraging, achievement is low and therefore the indicator *Qualifications uptake and achievement* is rated as minimal/mixed.

Indicator 6: Integrative approach

The extent to which qualifications promote an integrative approach to education and training and the nature of such qualifications

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't know/ Too soon to say
The NQF enables learners to *move* between academic qualifications and vocational qualifications	8,2%	65,5%	26,2%
Providers of education and training *value* each others qualifications	19,1%	55,7%	25,2%
The NQF promotes/leads to greater *co-operation* between formal education system and the world of work and training	8,6%	68,2%	23,3%
Education qualifications and vocational qualifications are viewed as *equally important*	18,7%	62,1%	19,2%
Both *theory and practice* are included in NQF qualifications	5,4%	78,7%	16,0%
South Africa has adopted a *unified approach* to education and training	9,2%	68,8%	22,0%
The integration of education and training has improved *career and learning pathing*	8,7%	71,5%	19,8%

Table 12: Survey responses for Indicator 6

Significant positive responses were received on the last three questions of this section of the survey: respondents felt that both theory and practice are included in NQF qualifications (78,7%); that a unified approach in education and training is followed (68,8%) and that there seems to be an improvement in career and learning pathing through an integrative approach (71,5%). However, it seems that the three questions represented the respondents' perceptions of what could be achieved through an integrative approach, but that integrative *practice* is less evident. Nevertheless, some of the other responses to this part of the survey indicate that there is strong agreement on the *principle* of integration. The other questions received moderate responses (ranging between 55,7% to 68,2%).

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, it became evident that many qualifications consciously integrate theory and practice (8: 24- 54). This understanding of 'integration' and of 'an integrative approach' therefore seems to have become embedded in the design of qualifications.

While two thirds of respondents (65,5%) believed that the NQF enables learners to move between academic and vocational qualifications, comments in interviews on issues of articulation between vocational and academic streams were mixed. They included 'we have not experienced it yet, so it is too soon to say' (4:31), 'still in the process' (4:31), 'in policy yes, in theory at least but in practice it's a long journey to undergo' (4:36) to 'I think it is much easier' (4:32). However, limited but relevant examples of cases were received which showed that an integrative approach was being successfully implemented between institutions and between workplaces and institutions.

The relative value of qualifications attained in different contexts of the education and training system is, according to the survey responses, not yet a reality. While more than half of the respondents (55,7%) indicated that they believed that providers do value each other's qualifications, a quarter (25,2%) said that they did not know, or that it is too soon to say.

A trade union representative felt, for example, that vocational qualifications were *not* seen as equal to academic qualifications:

> …in some quarters vocational qualifications are not seen as equally important as educational qualifications. That kind of integration has not yet happened. Those who have gone through vocational training, their qualifications are seen as low. It also depends on where people see you coming from, from which particular institution you got your qualification (5:11).

The survey responses to the question of co-operation also seem to reflect the desire to co-operate in practice (68,2%). The difficulties, but also the need for greater co-operation between roleplayers was noted by many interview respondents. Comments included:

- tensions between public and private providers: 'private providers are taking away our business' (4:32)
- current lack of co-operation due to 'turf wars' (4:32)
- new partnerships in KwaZulu-Natal that were not possible in the past (4:32)
- integration has led to 'co-operation between companies in the industry…'(4:33)

The desire for the establishment of a more integrative approach was evident across all categories of stakeholders. An ETQA manager expressed the view that it was crucial to involve business in education and training (2:13):

> Unless you involve people who are business minded, who are on the ground in business, unless you get that sort of expertise involved, nothing will happen, it will remain talk shops, pie in the sky stuff.

In addition, some positive comments regarding an integrative practice emerged:

Interviewees believed that a more integrated system will be enabled by the mergers of technical colleges, and by the mergers of technikons and universities. This was noted as having contributed to improved parity between workplace learning and education:

> At least there's a recognition now, if we talk about learning, that we're not talking about sitting at a desk and studying and working. We're also now talking about in the workplace, behind a sewing machine, you're also busy with working and training (3:20).

> …it makes sense to integrate universities and technikons and the like. I think they are not nearly as involved in business and practice outside as they should be (3:21).

It was also noted that integration leads to greater employability

> It's because I say you go when you have to learn both theory and practical you will be able to enter into the labour market much more easily than a person who only learns theory (3:22).

Evidence of private providers' involvement in occupationally directed qualifications was noted (2:13).

In the tourism sector it was mentioned that the integrated approach has influenced assessment practices. For example, there was new awareness of the inadequacy of assessing learners unless they have had practical exposure (4:34).

Evidence of the perception that the system is still fragmented included: acknowledgement of the differences between academic and vocational and/or workplace training; lack of trust between universities, and the confusion resulting from the NQF review process:

> In my opinion, a person coming from a university and a person who has received practical training are different - the person who has received the practical training has taken 50% of his time exploring and doing the things - he would be better off than a person who comes from a university situation… (3:21, paraphrased).

People don't see the benefits of the two systems. The fight [between] the two systems now comes about because there isn't enough structure to support the development of the one and the development of the other (4:39).

[U]niversities don't trust one another - it's all about money (4:36).

The NQF Review and the Interdependent Task Team's reports created much “unclarity” when they said that the two must be separated (5:11).

Another ETQA manager notes the divide between non-unit standard-based qualifications and unit standard-based qualifications (2:14). She remarked that higher education providers, such as technikons, had recently begun to show more interest in unit standard-based qualifications, to the extent that they were developing the qualifications. However, a respondent from a public provider expressed the opinion that an integrative approach does not address the different purposes of qualifications:

…the aim of a full qualification is different from the aim of the vocational qualification (4:36).

Level of impact

Minimal/mixed impact	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system

While there seems to be strong support for the notion of an integrative approach, particularly as it relates to the integration of theory and practice in the design of qualifications and the delivery and assessment of learning, examples in practice are still emerging. The evidence presented on this Impact Indicator, *Integrative approach*, suggests that the level of impact is minimal/mixed. An integrative approach was often seen as partnerships and collaboration. Nevertheless progress towards parity of esteem between institutions and between institutions and workplaces seems to be slow despite significant support for a more integrated system.

Indicator 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

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don’t Know/ Too soon to say
Learners, in particular those learners who were previously excluded, are able to gain access to NQF qualifications	7,4%	79,0%	13,6%
People with disabilities gain access to education and training institutions	7,0%	74,9%	18,1%
Equal access is given to learners of both genders	6,3%	82,4%	11,2%
People of all ages can access education and training institutions	8,7%	78,3%	13,0%
People in all of South Africa’s population groups gain access to education and training institutions	12,8%	74,8%	12,4%

Institutional admission practices facilitate learner entry to further and higher education and training	15,2%	65,0%	19,8%
Systems and procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) are available for learners	20,2%	52,2%	27,6%

Table 13: Survey responses for Indicator 7

These results suggest a strong consensus that access to education and training has improved. Access is open to previously excluded groups (79,1%), people with disabilities (74,9%), women (82,4%) learners of all ages (78,3%), and all population groups (74,8%). Two thirds of all respondents (65,3%) also had positive views on institutional admission practices and just more than half (52,2%) believed that systems for RPL are available.

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this perception was confirmed. Flexible entry requirements, improved access to the qualifications and RPL were in most cases explicitly stated as principles underpinning the qualifications (8:24- 54). According to the analysis, the National Certificate Electrical, for example, is designed for learners who could not gain entry to formal training institutions in the past (8:45).

On the general question about access to NQF qualifications by previously excluded groups, some respondents identified significant improvements. For example, there had been a huge influx of previously disadvantaged people into the Human Resources (HR) sector:

> The applications for professional registration are practically 80% from previously disadvantaged people… I think that not only are [they] interested in studying but also finding jobs in our profession and being able to register, because there is this career path. We are not excluding anybody, we are saying this is where you start, this is where you can go from here and this is how you do it (2:15).

Some employers also stated that previously excluded learners had better access to skills development opportunities and learnerships (6:16), although it was argued that access was inhibited by bureaucratic blockages (6:17).

Other general comments were that South Africa was still dealing with the legacy of apartheid (4:43), and that financial constraints were a real barrier to access (4:39 and 4:40).

Another respondent pointed out that the focus had to be on completion as well as access:

> Current research indicates that those students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not able to complete and that is an indicator of whether the system is working or not (4:40).

Providers generally believed that there were no barriers to people with disabilities arising from the nature of the qualifications or their own policies and practices. Many employers referred to their practice of employing significant numbers of people with disabilities. However, there were resource-related problems. One provider admitted that there were difficulties, due to lack of specialist expertise to support education of deaf people, for example (3:23). The problem of physical access was highlighted by a trade unionist, who also referred to the cost of access to Braille. (5:13). One provider was particularly forthright:

> I am sorry that we [fail disabled learners] because of physical access. Many places are not accessible for people in wheelchairs for instance. A lot of learning programmes would be inaccessible to blind or partially visually impaired people… because of the nature of it. And I really must say to you that very few colleges have gone out of their way to make it total access in terms of disabilities. It's a strike against us (4:39).

There were few comments on gender. One respondent noted an increase of male students in the health and beauty sector (2:15). Another a trade unionist believed that the position of women had not improved:

> I find that many [male] workers [feel] threatened by female workers when we talk equity issues as much as white people still [feel] threatened by black people (5:13).

Comments on age-related access came mainly from providers and employers who pointed to the wide age range of learners entering education and training and accessing NQF qualifications (4:39 and 6:17).

As far as access across population groups was concerned, it was reported that the proportion of black students in FET colleges had risen from around 20% in 1990 to about 95% today (4:41). Examples were quoted such as the access of black students to courses in asphalt technology (5:13). An ETQA respondent thought that learnerships would increase the number of black students but also pointed out the lack of black assessors and facilitators (2:16).

An employer respondent thought that admission practices were now more open:

> It's not as difficult any more. I mean you can now get admissions just because of age. When I was studying you couldn't do that. If people go now with the NQF qualifications and go into the workplace, they can access university education [which they couldn't before]… (6:17).

Not surprisingly, the topic of RPL provoked most reaction. There were reports of developments on the ground. A provider in the HET sector reported that there was a dedicated RPL post in the institution (4:46). One Department respondent noted that 'a few [higher education institutions] are already implementing RPL as some form of entry assessment.' (3:25). An ETQA respondent said:

> The technikons [have] very strong RPL departments we are referring people for qualifications to them. What we are actually saying [to learners] is that you now have a choice and you have to price [the institutions] and…make a comparison (2:16).

Providers referred to a number of examples of RPL initiatives at various stages of development (4:42 and 4:43). However, others suggested that RPL systems were not yet in place (3:26 and 4:42), that there was a lack of understanding of RPL on the ground and that processes needed to be simplified (3:26). Another said that 'the people who need it most are those who can least afford it.' (3:26). It was also suggested that RPL candidates might be regarded as 'weaker' than those with conventionally-acquired qualifications (3:26).

An FET respondent was sceptical about the prospects for RPL:

> The RPL thing isn't going to work because the funding system of universities specifically relates to how long that learner spends with his bum on that seat… RPL is a short process, there is no funding mechanism to RPL. There just isn't (4:42).

Another respondent said that RPL processes were too cumbersome and paper-oriented (4:43). An HET institution reported that each faculty had an RPL quality assurance committee but that it was a 'tedious process'. This respondent referred also to a more informal process whereby some applicants without a degree but who had experienced what was thought to be an appropriate training process were admitted to a Master's degree. The implication was that academics should be trusted to undertake this process without excessive bureaucracy.

Trade unions tended to feel that RPL was not widely available to workers:

> It has been a nightmare. RPL has not been accessible to people… it was made to be a very complex procedure and a very expensive exercise… (5:13).

Another said:

> It should not be an added cost… providers must provide all forms of assessment to learners, including RPL (5:15).

Level of impact

Moderate impact	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system

In general the perceptions reflected in the survey point to a moderate impact on *Equity of Access*. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements associated with this Indicator. Examples were given of developments that would support these judgements. On the other hand, respondents identified significant issues still to be addressed in the area of RPL.

Indicator 8: Redress practices

The extent to which redress practices, including the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), facilitate the award of credits and/or access of learners to learning programmes

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't know/ Too soon to say
Learners obtain credits towards NQF qualifications through the recognition of prior learning	12,4%	61,9%	25,7%
Learners are granted access to further and higher education and training institutions whether or not they have a matriculation certificate and/or other formal entry requirements	21,2%	53,6%	25,3%
Eligible employees are promoted even if they do not have a matriculation certificate	25,0%	44,2%	30,9%
Education and training institutions implement measures to facilitate the redress of past unfair practices	10,5%	64,9%	24,7%

Table 14: Survey responses for Indicator 8

While almost two thirds of the respondents (61,9%) indicated that learners can obtain credits towards NQF qualifications through RPL, slightly more than half (53,6%) believed that learners were granted access to further and higher education and training institutions without a matriculation certificate and/or other formal entry requirements.

Interview respondents supported the quantitative results but indicated that the matriculation certification is still a major barrier to RPL and redress particularly in terms of entry to higher education. They also noted that, in their view, matriculation is not considered a reliable indicator of success in higher education, but without matriculation as a minimum, it is difficult to get employment (3:28). A provider argued that a matriculation certificate should no longer be the sole criterion for entry to a higher education learning programmes - experience should also be recognised (4:45). In the respondents' view, even learners who have attained matriculation certificates seem to find it difficult to access higher education programmes. Learners are often required to do a foundation programme before they gain entry to the qualification (4:44).

Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of support for the idea of RPL. RPL is seen to be giving recognition to learners with extensive experience in order to gain access to further and higher education and training, particularly for those learners who did not have the opportunities to gain entry to education and training in the past. Currently, it is felt that experience is not taken into account in formal learning environments (3:27).

However, one ETQA indicated that they have had very few requests for RPL - only for unit standards achieved through a City and Guilds certificate offered by a South African technical college. However, they expected that requests for RPL may emanate from learners who completed qualifications offered by providers prior to the requirement to become accredited through an ETQA (2:17).

Other issues inhibiting the implementation of RPL seem to include a bias towards academic learning. A departmental official, for example, mentioned that RPL 'can't replace academic qualifications', but that it does have a place in education and training (3:27).

A higher education provider noted with concern that with the capping of enrolments in higher education, access to learning programmes through RPL may become more difficult (4:45).

A respondent noted that without adequate funding incentives, redress might not take place (4:46).

However, many positive comments about RPL were received:

> RPL is viewed by some respondents as a possible cost saving mechanism, particularly if it can be undertaken instead of workplace assessment, which is seen to be slow and cumbersome - it may therefore be possible to fast-track learners through RPL procedures (2:17).

A respondent also noted that institutions seem to be much more accommodating - learners are not simply refused entry to higher education - but he voiced some doubt about the sincerity of such actions, citing the need to reflect equity of access and changes in the demographic profile of institutions (3:27).

Progress towards redress in workplaces seem to be slow - less than half of the respondents (44,2%) indicated that employees are promoted on the basis of performance and not solely on minimum qualification requirements. However, there are encouraging examples of recognition of experience:

> [Qualifications and experience are] both important but what is most important is the experience that the person has ….you might find that …this person's [experience] is equal to [the one with] qualifications although he or she doesn't have those qualifications (6:18).

While a higher education institution indicated that they do not consider it possible to promote somebody without the requisite qualification (4:45), an FET provider indicated that experience and a 'good track record' will secure promotion (4:45). Other providers agree - the person must be able to 'prove that [he/she] can do the job' (4:45)

Employers in particular were more concerned about experience and performance as the basis for promotion, but added that if matriculation is the minimum requirement, they will accept that. In their view, a prospective candidate could undergo an RPL assessment to determine whether he/she is eligible for promotion (6:18).

However, a trade union does not seem to be convinced, for example:

> I don't see that. I think they [employers] may have bought into it, but they are not doing enough. When you look at some of them who are still mainly employing white people, you can see that it is not 100% (5:14).

Level of impact

Minimal/mixed impact	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system

Redress practices were almost without exception seen as the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and progress towards achieving the implementation of RPL is still considered slow. This is also borne out by the quantitative responses to Indicator 7: *Equity of access* where the question dealt with RPL systems. Most respondents indicated strong support for the principle of RPL, but between a quarter and a third of respondents, (between 24,7% and 30,9%) indicated that they are unsure about the implementation of RPL, or that it is too soon to make a judgment about the impact of RPL on education and training. Nevertheless, based on the evidence, it seems as if there is a high level of awareness of the need to redress past injustices.

In terms of the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, it became evident that while redress practice is dependent on the institution's implementation thereof, the design of qualifications consciously make provision for RPL.

These findings may seem slightly at odds with those from Impact Indicator 7: *Equity of access*. The distinction may be that while respondents feel that there are now some opportunities to gain credits through RPL, they do not believe that learners are able to “cash in” such credits in a way that is significant in terms of redress. *Redress practices* is therefore rated minimal/mixed.

Indicator 9: Nature of learning programmes

The expansion of learning opportunities and the impacts of learning programmes, Including an outcomes-based approach to curriculum development and learning and teaching

	Disagree/Strongly disagree	Agree/Strongly agree	Don't Know/Too soon to say
There is a demand for learning programmes based on NQF qualifications	3,8%	79,0%	17,1%
A wide range of NQF qualifications is available to facilitate curriculum development	9,9%	65,8%	24,3%
The implementation of the NQF has led to a major re-design of courses to adopt an outcomes-based approach	4,2%	76,2%	19,6%
The quality of learning programmes is improved by using an outcomes-based approach	8,8%	70,9%	20,3%
The NQF has led to an improvement in the design of learning programmes	6%	72,6%	21,4%

Table 15: Survey responses for Indicator 9

The majority of respondents (79,0%) surveyed indicated that there was a high demand for learning programmes based on NQF qualifications. Two-thirds of the respondents (65,8%) thought that there is a wide range of NQF qualifications available to facilitate curriculum development, but a quarter of respondents felt that they didn't know or that it was too soon to say. A trade union and an employer expressed similar sentiments on this demand for learning programmes:

> We want to be sent to the institution that trains us so we are qualified and given certificates to show that we are competent (Labour) (5:14).

> It stands out like a sore thumb wherever you go….whatever training that we undergo with you, we can have some sort of paper that says we have attended and how it will assist us going forward (Employer) (6:18).

When it came to the redesign of courses to adopt an outcomes-based approach, a large number of respondents (76,2%) indicated that the implementation of the NQF had led to a major reconfiguration of programmes. Almost three quarters of respondents (70,9%) felt that the quality of learning programmes was improved by using an outcomes-based approach. A similar number of respondents (72,6%) also felt that the implementation of the NQF had resulted in improvement to the design of learning programmes.

A private provider agreed that while there was a demand for learning programmes based on NQF qualifications, they felt that industry would not require learning programmes to be registered on the NQF unless they wanted to get their Skills Levy back (4:46).

Of the respondents interviewed, there was general agreement that there was a wide range of NQF qualifications available for curriculum development, but a few providers felt that the curriculum development process was very cumbersome. (4:54) One provider felt that the repetitive nature of assessment criteria within NQF qualifications was cumbersome and impeded curriculum development (4:48).

Significant, though contradictory, evidence was received from respondents interviewed as to whether the implementation of the NQF had led to a major redesign of courses. On the one hand, some FET and HE providers stated that they had undergone major redesign processes of their curriculum (4:47). A public HE institution noted that this redesign process was one of their highest priorities (4:47). Another GET/ABET provider explained that they had gone through a major redesign process as a result of a government department's requirements (4:47). An employer stated:

> People throwing theory at you means nothing…you need to apply it… and demonstrate what you are doing. We've got preferred providers and are looking for people with accreditation (6:19).

Other respondents stated difficulties with the redesign process. A government department made the following statement about the redesign of qualifications aligned to the NQF:

> I think people have tried to do so, but people don't now how to do that….also, it is a bureaucratic process (3:28).

The same government department also noted that as a result of people having no choice but to redesign courses according to NQF requirements, the redesign process was very slow (3:28). An employer stated that their redesign process was merely to comply with NQF requirements, but that they still taught the course using the same materials (6:19).

Most respondents interviewed felt that the quality of learning programmes had improved as a result of the implementation of the NQF. An ETQA stated:

> I can tell you there is a difference. A difference of attitude, there is a difference of quality of ethical issues, there is a difference of curriculum (2:17).

A private FET provider reflected on their previous practice compared to their current NQF-aligned processes in stating that:

> We didn't have good quality programmes and quality management systems and I think that's important. (4:47).

Similarly, most respondents interviewed felt that the implementation of the NQF had led to an improvement in the design of learning programmes. The same ETQA quoted above reflected that:

> …you couldn't think back that we ever had the old system. You know the way people were taught….what you call lackadaisical. This is a fantastic system (2:17).

A provider felt that the design of NQF learning programmes had improved:

> When you start with designing a programme you already have an idea what you're working towards…helps when you're developing materials and you are thinking in terms of what assessments [to conduct] (4:47).

Some education and labour department responses felt that learners benefited from new learning programmes:

> On the side of the learners, I think there's a lot of support…there's a lot of room being given to them to be more creative and take charge of their own learning (3:29).
>
> I think outcomes-based education is a good process of learning (3:29).
>
> I think learners enjoy the outcomes-based system more, because it is more practical (3:29).

One respondent noted mixed feelings towards an outcomes-based education system, as she felt that teachers had not been given enough training to deal with the implementation of this system (3:29).

Level of Impact

High positive impact	The research evidence shows a marked positive change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF

Qualitative and quantitative data received indicate a high positive impact for the indicator *Nature of learning programmes*. There is a close and consistent corroboration between interviews and the survey responses. A few negative points were raised but did not undermine the majority views on the NQF's impact on curriculum development, learning and teaching.