## Indicator 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

| | Disagree/ Strongly disagree | Agree/ Strongly agree | Don't know/ Too soon to say |
|---|---|---|---|
| The NQF has led to improved learning and teaching practices that address the *needs of learners* | 9,9% | 72,1% | 18,1% |
| New and improved *learner support systems* have been introduced by accredited education and training providers | 10,7% | 66,0% | 23,3% |
| Employers have introduced measures to *support* employees studying towards NQF qualifications | 11,6% | 61,6% | 26,7% |
| *Learner support structures* have improved significantly over the past few years | 14,5% | 59,2% | 26,2% |
| An *outcomes-based approach* has improved the quality of learning and teaching practices | 15,4% | 65,6% | 18,9% |
| Learning and teaching practices are *responsive* to the needs of learners | 10,0% | 73,8% | 16,3% |
| The *professional development of education and training practitioners* has received increased attention | 8,1% | 72,3% | 19,6% |

Table 16: Survey responses for Indicator 10

A significant number of respondents indicated that the needs of learners have been addressed through improved learning and teaching practices (72,1%) and also that the learning and teaching practices are in fact responsive to the needs of learners (73,8%).

Many respondents (72,3%) were of the opinion that the professional development of education and training practitioners had received increased attention. Interview respondents noted that numerous courses for professional development of educators are available (3:32):

> I think we have a lot of programs through the development of the NQF to make sure that side of [educators'] development is actually taken care of successfully…

A union focus group, on the other hand, was very critical of the limited professional development that was offered to educators:

> … with the professional development of educators they are subjected to programmes that are not of much value to them. We are wasting time due to the quality of training that they get. Those are the kinds of things that we have been raising, to ask for better quality programmes and to increase their presentation skills (5:15).

Substantial evidence, both of a quantitative (65,6%), as well as of a qualitative nature indicated support for the conclusion that an outcomes-based approach results in improved quality of learning and teaching practices. Comments included increased buy-in from senior management to implement systems (2:18), a move away from traditional learning (2:18), increased focus on learner support (3:30 and 5:16), establishment of quality assurance units within institutions (4:57), recent establishment of a department for academic development (4:50).

Examples of learner support structures included:

- an educator social committee that includes learners (4:51)
- a mentorship approach (4:50)
- policies on learner support (4:51)

Encouraging evidence of support systems seems to be emerging from the quantitative survey (61,6% indicated that support systems for employees are being put in place). Employers mentioned numerous examples of 'comprehensive learner support mechanisms' (6:20). However, the lack of support for learners in secondary schools was noted (6:21), as well as a lack of support from employers (noted during a trade union focus group, 5:15).

In terms of improved learning and teaching practices, the quantitative data suggests strong support (72,1%) but some interview respondents noted that the NQF is only indirectly responsible for this improvement, mainly through the changes in assessment practices (4:52).

Nevertheless, positive comments on using an outcomes-based approach were offered by a respondent from a higher education institution:

> I think the whole idea of outcomes is a wonderful asset to our model designers because you must always keep in mind that many of your academics at university do not have teacher training skills, so just having those outcomes already gives that focus (4:52).

Another respondent from a Western Cape FET institution agreed, but added that implementation was lacking:

> …there are a lot of wonderful things that the outcomes-based system is offering, but the implementation is just not there (4:53).

Other positive comments on the quality of learning and teaching included:

- learners have more than one opportunity to show competence (3:31)
- FET institutions are more responsive to learners (3:31)

*Level of impact*

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

There appears to have been a moderate impact on the *Quality of learning and teaching*. Although a significant amount of positive responses were received, e.g. the needs of learners had been addressed and the implementation of quality management systems, there were also some conflicting comments on measures to support employees. The evidence is therefore positive but not unqualified, and the impact is thus moderate.

## Indicator 11: Assessment Practices

The fairness, validity, reliability and practicability of the assessment of learning

| | Disagree/ Strongly disagree | Agree/ Strongly agree | Don't know/ Too soon to say |
|---|---|---|---|
| The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is *fair* (unbiased) | 7,1% | 65,4% | 27,5% |
| The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is *valid* (measures what it is supposed to measure) | 3,7% | 69,1% | 27,2% |
| The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is *reliable* (dependable and consistent) | 7,8% | 60,7% | 31,5% |
| The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications can be implemented *without undue difficulty* | 26,5% | 42,2% | 31,3% |
| *Significant positive changes* to assessment practices have occurred over the past few years | 7,8% | 66,2% | 26,0% |
| The *quality* of assessment practices has improved over the past few years | 11,2% | 61,4% | 27,4% |
| There has been no significant increase in the *workload* associated with assessment practices | 18,9% | 55,7% | 25,4% |
| *Feedback and appeal* mechanisms have become more accessible to learners and employees | 12,7% | 59,8% | 27,5% |
| The assessment of learning towards a specific NQF qualification is done in a *comparable and similar* manner by *different* providers of education and training | 15,5% | 49,0% | 35,5% |
| The *cost* of assessing learning towards NQF qualifications is not a barrier to effective practice | 22,1% | 46,6% | 31,3% |

Table 17: Survey responses for Indicator 11

Over two thirds of respondents feel that assessment is fair (65,4%) and valid (69,1%) and almost two thirds (60,7%) believe that assessment is reliable and that feedback and appeal mechanisms have improved (59,8%). Two thirds (66,2%) thought that there had been significant positive changes to assessment practices and almost two thirds (61,4%) that the quality of assessment had improved. However a quarter of respondents (26,5%) were not convinced that assessment could be implemented without undue difficulty or that there had not been a significant increase in workload associated with assessment (18,9%). Less than half (44,6%) thought that the cost of assessment was *not* a barrier to effective practice, while almost a quarter (22,1%) of respondents did not agree, and a third of respondents (31,3%) did not want to venture an opinion or felt that it was too soon to say whether cost can be considered a barrier to effective assessment practice.

However, there were many comments on the improvement of the quality of assessment. Lecturers and assessors were said to be taking assessment much more seriously.

> For the first time now these people have a structure… Now there is some system happening, the assessors are being trained, the moderators are being trained. What I have seen personally is a change in the attitude of the lecturers. They feel for the first time that they know what they are doing and there seems to be a change of attitude. There is confidence (2:19).

The improvement of assessment was seen as a development process. One respondent said that it would take time to make it work (2:20), while an employer said that it had taken a while to understand but that interaction with SETAs had helped (6:23). The notion that it is still too soon to say is reflected in the quantitative responses. In most cases between a quarter and two thirds (24,1% to 35%) of respondents indicated that they did not know, or that it is still too soon to say. An ETQA respondent said that people had found the language difficult at first but exposure to assessment training had made a big impact (2:20). A provider respondent agreed that the training of assessors had been beneficial.

The quality of assessment was said to have been improved through the use of assignments, case studies and problem solving (4:56). A private provider explained their practice as follows:

> You are guided by the specific outcomes, and you give learners ample time to prepare. You also take into account workplace context and assess the critical outcomes (4:65).

A higher education respondent said:

> …the assessment practice has changed tremendously. In our institution, we have recently adopted a policy… of continuous assessment, so we have changed our whole philosophy. There has been some improvement in our institution in the quality of assessment because we are now assessing students on smaller chunks of learning than in the past. When you go into continuous assessment, there is more in-depth learning. …In certain areas, we could already detect the improvement in the pass rates (4:56).

On the other hand, a Departmental respondent said that there had been little change in university assessment practice (3:34).

One private provider reported that assessment practices were now much better because of assessment policies and moderation (4:57). Another said that they were beginning to see an improvement, with assessment strongly linked to workplace learning (4:58).

An employer said that assessment was 'fair - not biased' (6:21). A trade union respondent agreed that assessment was 'very reliable' but thought that 'appeals could be improved' (5:16). However, another trade union respondent said that the intention was good but that assessments were not always objective because assessors could be manipulated by employers (5:16). Another trade union respondent thought that the quality assurance of assessment was affected by the desire of employers to save money (5:16). One ETQA respondent pointed to the potential for fraud in the use of portfolios (2:20).

A Departmental respondent argued that benefits were being reaped from provincial standardisation of school examinations (3:34). There was also some dissatisfaction with school examinations. One provider, commenting on national examinations, said:

> The quality of question papers is not better. [When I] look through the subjects I have knowledge of… I think it's gone back. And also when we come to the results…They go out with a matric certificate, they can't get into a university or a technikon because they just haven't got the kind of capabilities required to learn further (4:58).

A DoE respondent was of the view that there was a need for more contextualisation in examination papers.

Many respondents pointed to improvements in learning brought about by new assessment practices:

> If people know upfront that they're going to be assessed, they want to know the content of the material much better…They sort of understand that if they are employees already they know they're going to have to put this into practice… This links the assessment and the implementation in the workplace… Without the assessment world, you're just going on courses (4:55).

A private provider explained how assessment had made their organisation more learner-focused:

> You know that you 'have to think the learner': how do I assess the learner, how do I prepare the learner for assessment…(4:56).

Some employers noted benefits from the new assessment practices. One said that he now had more involvement with trainees and that quality control had improved (6:21). Another commented:

> It is an actual indicator of performance; it is linked to our performance appraisal system. It also upgrades the quality of the product that you manufacture (6:22).

However, another employer disliked the fact that he had to alter his training programme to fit new assessment requirements (6:22).

There were negative comments about paperwork, workload and cost. A private provider commented:

> … there was definitely an increase [in workload] and that is still a big problem for us at the moment… we had to change the perception of our staff towards assessment. They would have liked to go on with exams at the end of a short course … [but now have to] do continuous assessment. That's asking for a mind change (4:59).

Another private provider referred to having to 'go through this red tape to do a very simple assessment' (4:67). A higher education respondent said that there were 'huge implications in terms of staffing' (4:60). One private provider said that they had had to employ more trainers because of the workload but viewed that positively (4:59).

An ETQA respondent said:

> …assessments are so cumbersome that it's a real hassle and we need to find more and more ways of streamlining [e.g. electronic assessments] (2:20).

Other respondents said that paperwork, assessment and 'begging the kids to give you stuff' was having an adverse effect on teaching (4:59). Some thought that the solution might lie in more integrated assessment (4:60).

A private provider thought that it was 'hugely expensive for business and government'. Many employers thought that the workload and cost for them had increased. For example:

> Unfortunately yes, one would have to acknowledge that the workload has increased, making it difficult for supervisors … to complete all the paperwork (6:22).

> The whole process is just too long, you know, all the meetings you must have… takes too long… The people that developed it sit in ivory towers in Johannesburg. I don't think they've ever worked in a plant environment where you've got so many hours to produce so many cars… (6:22).

> It is a brilliant concept but whether it can work I actually doubt…I started researching [RPL] and how we are going to implement it. If you look at how much assessors charge per hour for assessment…(6:23).

*Level of impact*

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

The Impact Indicator, *Assessment practices*, is rated as having a moderate impact. There is strong evidence of beneficial effects on standards and on quality of learning. However, there are still major issues of workload and cost to be addressed. In addition, this indicator had a very high incidence of 'don't know' and 'too soon to say' quantitative responses, which may reflect that the system is still in development.

## Indicator 12: Career and learning pathing

The extent to which learning programmes support and enhance career and learning pathing

| | Disagree/ Strongly disagree | Agree/ Strongly agree | Don't know/ Too soon to say |
|---|---|---|---|
| Learners are becoming increasingly aware of career opportunities associated with specific NQF qualifications | 15,1% | 66,7% | 18,2% |
| Employers encourage employees to improve their qualifications by providing career paths | 16,2% | 67,9% | 16,0% |
| Education and training provider encourage learners to improve their qualifications by providing learning pathways | 10,0% | 74,4% | 15,6% |
| Learning programmes are designed to include Critical Cross-field Outcomes | 6,1% | 68,1% | 25,8% |
| Learning programmes have improved career and learning pathways | 7,6% | 72,7% | 19,7% |

Table 18: Survey responses for Indicator 12

Two-thirds of respondents (66,7%) indicated that they felt that learners are becoming increasingly aware of career opportunities associated with specific NQF qualifications. Almost three quarters of respondents (72,7%) noted that there is a clear link between learning and career pathways.

An ETQA noted that they have, through their SGBs, developed a framework of qualifications that 'flow one into the other'. They felt that the NQF helped to delineate levels clearly, to the extent that professional registration is integrated into career pathways from NQF level 5, whereas before these pathways were only available from first degree level upwards (2:20).

Some departmental respondents also indicated that employees are aware of career pathways, but noted that a career path is subject to the availability of new positions (3:36) and that the unavailability of career opportunities in the departments may result in a loss of credibility in the value of career pathing (3:36). Nevertheless, it seems that in general employers encourage employees to improve their qualifications by providing career paths (67,9%).

Other departmental respondents indicated that they did not think learners are aware of such pathways and that many departmental officials are not too sure about where their own qualifications lie within the NQF (3:36).

A concern raised is that career pathways may result in unrealistic expectations on the part of learners, especially if the learning is not directly associated with their job function (3:36).

Skills programmes are seen to be conducive to career pathing:

> [T]he courses that are offered now give a person [the ability to] exit at any stage, and when you want to re-enter you have credits that will allow you to re-enter. [In] the old programmes…you [had] to start all over again (3:37).

The quantitative responses dealing with the provision of learning pathways by education and training providers, is very encouraging (74,4%). However, providers indicated that they offer career guidance, but seemed doubtful about whether this helps learners to have an understanding of career paths (4:61). Other providers indicated that it might be too soon to say despite their efforts to explain the implications of the NQF in relation to career paths in their orientation programmes (4:61).

A higher education provider also raises doubts as to whether 'the framework as such has all of a sudden made these guys start thinking about career [pathways]' (4:62).

In the same vein, providers noted that career and learning pathing do not necessarily relate to the NQF *per se* rather it 'relates to the activities in the different programmes in the schools' (4:61). On the other hand their experience is that learners are much more aware of possibilities, but that such possibilities are limited in rural areas (4:61).

An FET institution indicated that their learners increasingly use their qualification as a basis for entry to higher education (4:62) thereby creating a learning pathway.

A higher education institution mentioned that they are in the process of developing a qualification matrix for their fields of learning and subsequently career and learning pathways will become clearer (4:62).

In addition, as indicated above, more than two-thirds of respondents (67,9%) indicated that employers are encouraging employees to improve their qualifications by providing career paths. However, comments were mixed. One private provider noted with concern that in their opinion, employers are not very supportive in establishing career pathways (4:62), while another provider observed that there seemed to be increasing support for work-based learning and the development of career and learning paths.

A trade union agreed that learners' awareness of career and learning paths has improved but that some implementation problems were experienced (5:17).

Large employers, in particular, felt that the introduction of the NQF enhanced an awareness of career pathways and that the NQF conferred credibility. Through their programmes, learners are able to advance 'through the ranks'. Older learners also seem to take the opportunity to advance their careers due to competition with younger entrants (6:23):

> There are lots of examples of people who have gone through the ranks by means of our competency acquisition process, which has set the example for other [learners]. We are doing this in accordance with the NQF guidelines, giving it [the process] a lot of credibility (6:23).

Most respondents indicated that education and training providers offer meaningful learning pathways.

In addition, more than two thirds of the respondents (68,1%) believed that critical cross-field outcomes are embedded in learning programmes, while a quarter (25,8%) indicated that they could not venture an opinion, or that it was too soon to say. One provider indicated that the critical cross-field outcomes were important and that they were integrated into the learning programme. A holistic approach to learning seemed to be emerging.

*Level of impact*

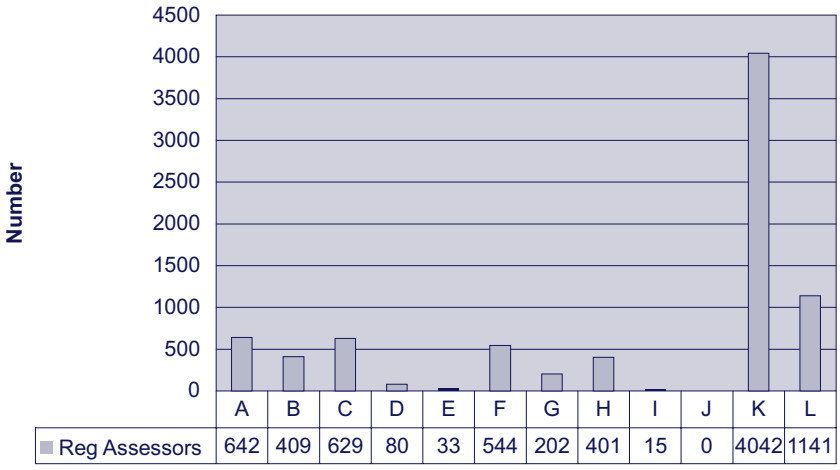
| | |
|---|---|
| **Moderate impact** | The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system |

While many respondents indicated that *Career and learning pathing* are not as widely known as it could be, there is evidence that providers of education and training, and particularly large employers, have developed (or are in the process of developing) clear career and learning pathways for prospective learners.

## Indicator 13: Number of registered assessors and moderators

The number of skilled assessors and moderators required to support an effective education and training system

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




Graph 9: Number of registered assessors by sector
(From the SAQA Audit Report, forthcoming 2005)

The graph above is a summary of data obtained during the SAQA ETQA auditing process that took place during 2004. Due to the sensitive nature of the data, the identity of the individual ETQAs have been withheld and replaced with the letters A to L.

From the data the following observations can be made:

- a total of 8,138 assessors have been registered by the 12 ETQAs included in the summary;
- there are significant disparities across the various sectors, ranging from 0 to 4,042 registered assessors; and
- the average number of assessors registered across the 12 ETQAs is 678 - removing ETQA K, this average falls to 341.

During the interviews respondents noted that there were very few black assessors:

> One area where we have huge lack….is that we don't have enough assessors and facilitators of colour (2:16).
>
> Even at the technikons in total in the entire country there are three black assessors (2:22).

An ETQA respondent explained how few assessors had been registered in their sector:

> We are now registering assessors up to the point I think we have maybe 28 assessors….we have got some moderators, not many, a few, and actually only one verifier registered….(2:22).

ETQAs also noted just how difficult it was to obtain assessors who could function at the expected level:

> But the fact is that many of the people just aren't … making the grade. It has actually been a fight to get people to comply with quality assurance (2:22).

*Level of impact*

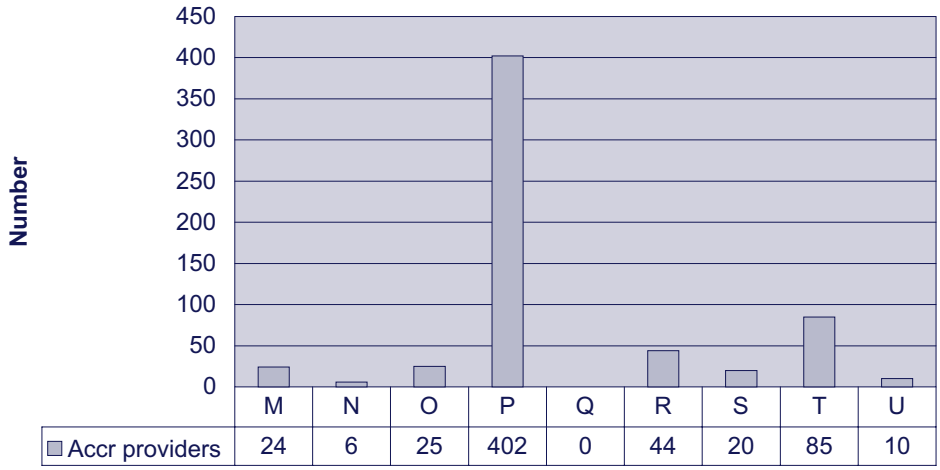
| | |
|---|---|
| **Minimal/mixed impact** | The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system |

The *Number of registered assessors and moderators* is rated as minimal/mixed. It is not rated as negative, as, compared to the pre-NQF dispensation, there are at least some assessors functioning within the national quality assurance system. On the other hand, the numbers are so low in some sectors, that much progress can still be made.

## Indicator 14: Number of accredited providers

The number of education and training providers who meet the quality requirements of the system

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




Graph 10: Number of accredited providers by sector
(From the SAQA Audit Report, forthcoming 2005)

As in the case of Indicator 13: *Number of registered assessors and moderators*, the graph above is a summary of data obtained during the SAQA ETQA auditing process that took place during 2004. Due to the sensitive nature of the data, the identity of the individual ETQAs have been withheld and replaced with the letters M to U.

From the data the following observations can be made:

- a total of 616 providers have been accredited by the 9 ETQAs included in the summary;
- there are significant disparities across the various sectors, ranging from 0 to 402 accredited providers; and
- the average number of providers accredited across the 9 ETQAs is 68 - removing ETQA P, this average falls to 27.

Interview comments on the number of accredited providers were limited, and even where they did occur; the indication was that the numbers are very low. The following responses from ETQA managers illustrate the point:

- …in the process of about five providers coming in (2:23)
- …about ten (2:23)
- …about 30 that are going to meet full accreditation (2:23)
- …there will be about 10 of them that have that in place (2:23)
- …at least 22 or 26 has submitted their application (2:23)
- …we've got our first pilot workplace provider…that we just accredited (2:23)

*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 |

As was the case with the previous indicator, the *Number of accredited providers* is rated as minimal/mixed. It is not rated as negative, as, compared to the pre-NQF dispensation, there are a number of providers functioning within the national quality assurance system. The 616 accredited providers from nine ETQAs represent, in particular, private providers of education and training. It is important to note that public institutions did not have to seek accreditation through Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs) as they are deemed accredited through the legislation governing public provisioning. Nevertheless, the total number of accredited private providers seems to present a disturbing trend, though it would be difficult to say how many providers the emerging education and training system actually needs. However, the fact that in some sectors no providers have been accredited places this indicator at a minimal/mixed rating.

Both Impact Indicators 13 and 14 require further research. The results from only 9 or 12 out of a possible 35 ETQAs do not present a complete picture. Furthermore a comparison with other NQFs in terms of the expected number of assessors and providers may be useful.

## Indicator 15: Quality Assurance Practices

The extent to which quality assurance practices enhance the quality of learning, teaching and assessment

| | Disagree/ Strongly disagree | Agree/ Strongly agree | Don't know/ Too soon to say |
|---|---|---|---|
| *New forms* of learning, teaching and assessment have been introduced as a result of quality assurance practices | 5,6% | 74,5% | 19,9% |
| The quality assurance of education and training has *improved* since the implementation of the NQF | 11,8% | 61,2% | 27,1% |
| NQF quality assurance practices do not cause *administrative* and *bureaucratic problems* | 31,7% | 35,3% | 33,0% |
| NQF quality assurance practices ensure that qualifications are based on *nationally agreed standards* | 6,5% | 72,3% | 21,3% |
| NQF quality assurance practices have improved the *quality of education and training providers* | 9,6% | 62,6% | 27,9% |
| The requirements and processes required to qualify as an *accredited provider* is effective and timeous | 14% | 46,0% | 40,0% |
| *The process of establishing unit standards* for an NQF qualification is not without undue difficulties | 13,5% | 53,0% | 33,6% |

Table 19: Survey responses for Indicator 15

Three quarters of the respondents (74,5%) indicated that quality assurance practices had led to the introduction of new forms of learning, teaching and assessment. While almost two thirds (61,2%) also commented that quality assurance practices have improved since the implementation of the NQF, a quarter of respondents (27,1%) thought that it was still too soon to say.

However, more than a third of respondents (35,3%) considered quality assurance practices to be overly bureaucratic and to cause many administrative problems, while another third (33,0%) indicated that they did not know.

ETQAs seem to be conscious of the need for a developmental approach to the design and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms:

> We don't want to cripple providers in [the accreditation] process …some of them have been badly hurt…We've actually taken people by the hand and schooled them through the system…[we give them] accreditation…then another year for monitoring and then a third year for audit so that we could prove we gave everybody an equal opportunity (2:23).

SMME providers in particular, have been given much support:

> …it's been extremely difficult for [SMME] providers to get through the quality assurance [process]…We have allowed them extensions, there have been different tiers of accreditation…we try not to come from a point of view where we [are] perceived as a body that doesn't guide, that doesn't provide assistance (2:26).

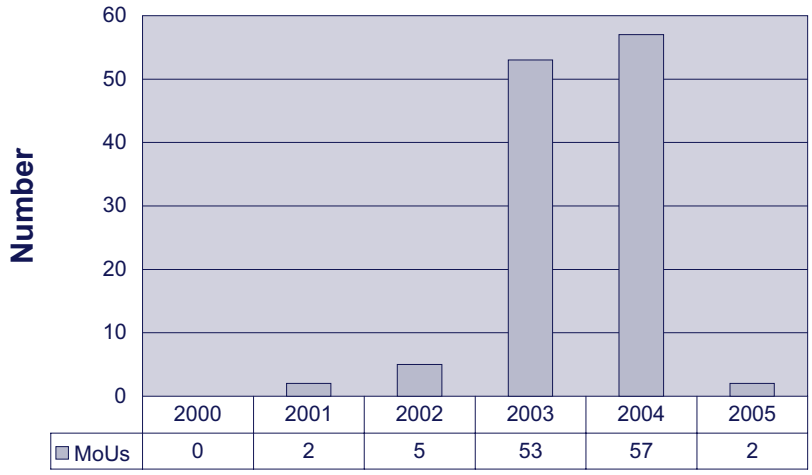
However, ETQAs in particular noted that quality assurance is hampered by the lack of agreements between education and training quality assurance bodies - the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) - especially between SETA ETQAs and the band ETQAs. One ETQA noted:

> …we will have to be very careful that we are not overstepping our boundaries as an ETQA because of the higher education situation where we are tolerated at most as an ETQA by higher education (CHE-HEQC) and they may not continue to tolerate this (2:24).

Although many MoUs are in place, the feeling is that the MoUs are only 'an agreement to agree' (2:26) and that it does not seem to be very helpful to the process. In addition, the legislative anomalies, for example between the SAQA Act and the Higher Education Act, result in some cases in a dual accreditation of providers (2:27).

A provider quite openly stated that if the MoUs are not in place between ETQAs, they simply go directly to a different ETQA without consideration of the shared primary focus:

> …those processes are not in place so we are sidelining that and we are going directly to MERSETA or W&RSETA (4:65).




Graph 11: Signed Memoranda of Understanding

ETQAs are voicing frustration that despite the fact that common audit criteria for accreditation as a quality assurance body are used, there seems to be little mutual trust between ETQAs:

> …we would think that the same rules, hopefully, apply to everybody, so if they have gone through an audit from SAQA and everything is in place the process ought to be trustworthy (2:25).

The tension between ETQAs due to overlapping responsibilities is keenly felt and this seems to be compounded by the feeling that some ETQAs are more powerful than others:

> There is the perception that CHE is the authority and that they have more power…(2:25).
>
> The CHE will do what the CHE wants to do…we can either participate or we can leave. It's being horrible (2:25).

While some ETQAs noted that education and training quality assurance bodies that are more advanced in their processes are most helpful towards each other, some feel that the CHE in particular, creates unnecessary blockages in the system:

> …it came from the point that the CHE is all powerful and that they had the power to close institutions down if they felt like it. The harm that the CHE has done…[threatening our] institutions with closure (2:27).

In addition, despite stringent quality assurance requirements, parity of esteem between private and public providers linked to different ETQAs has not yet been achieved:

> They don't accept [the learners]. [The learners] have done exactly the same curriculum…[they] don't allow a learner with a …qualification from a private institution (2:28).

This seems to be compounded by the fact that according to ETQAs responsible for private providers, the Department of Education is not helping to facilitate quality assurance between public and private provisioning:

> …what has become increasingly clear is that the DoE [Department of Education] has no understanding of anything that happens outside the formal academic environment and is not willing to learn and not willing to concede that [private provisioning] is making a contribution (2:28).

The Department of Labour (DoL) on the other hand, seems to duplicate the quality assurance processes that have been put in place by the ETQAs, for smaller, more informal education and training providers. This may ultimately result in offering training that cannot be recognised in terms of credits towards skills programmes and qualifications:

> When we select providers there are a couple of criteria [to determine] whether they are able to do the training. The SETAs [ETQAs] work with the formal sector…we work more with the smaller informal sector (3:40).

Nevertheless, there is evidence that the DoL is increasingly using accredited providers:

> …we prefer to use [accredited providers] and encourage the others…to also make sure that they are quality assured in terms of what they are offering (3:40)

Most respondents indicated strong support for nationally agreed standards (72,3%). The benefits of quality assurance (3:40), including the standardisation of education and training against nationally developed standards (3:42), are seen to be emerging despite the feeling that ETQAs do not yet have sufficient capacity and that there are many inconsistencies between quality assurance processes (3:41 - 42).

The lack of consistency leads to opportunities to circumvent the system. A private provider in Gauteng, for example, explained how he was requested to collude with another provider: without doing any training he would be paid 50% of the invoice (4:52). From the respondent's comments it appears as if the requirement to use an accredited provider was the reason for this inappropriate request.

However, national standards are considered to be important benchmarks:

> …you benchmark against unit standards, or the national standards, the NQF standards. My perspective is that it's immensely valuable (4:76).

Standards also assist with uniformity of provisioning (4:77), facilitate the re-alignment of old programmes with new qualifications (4:94) and are contextualised for particular purposes (4:77). Even some public higher education institutions came out in support of standardisation:

> …we all know the same things no matter [from] which university or college we are coming from. The standardisation of qualifications has helped (4:77).

However, standard setting is seen to be bureaucratic, time-consuming and costly. Standards Generation Bodies (SGBs) are not sufficiently funded. ETQAs and providers alike noted that there should be financial support for standard generation:

> To get the people around the table [to] start up an SGB … is very costly. Institutions don't pay for that (4:77).

Nevertheless, standards seem to be useful as they capture the 'core' competence of the organisation (4:78).

Despite the bureaucratic nature of achieving accreditation, the stringent requirements for accreditation as education and training providers are welcomed:

> I think in the past many training providers who claimed to be providers got away with murder, where they would open up a training institution for six months and then close down and disappear …leaving the unfortunate learners in the lurch (3:42)

Almost two thirds of respondents (62,6%) agreed that the implementation of quality assurance practices has improved the quality of education and training providers.
Providers in particular, seemed to agree that quality assurance was essential and necessary and that quality assurance has improved:

> We started our quality assurance office five years ago and we are already in the third year of our own internal self-evaluation cycles in faculties (4:72).

From the providers' point of view, the development of quality assurance mechanisms links strongly with the requirements for accreditation by an appropriate ETQA. This seems to point to a culture of 'compliance' rather than deep change. For example:

> …we are all forced to have a quality assurance committee, [but] it hasn't met once, it hasn't discussed a single issue …on quality assurance ... (4:74).

However, there is strong evidence that quality management is becoming embedded in practice:

> …[developing a quality management system] was a learning experience for all of us because there are lots of new things in terms of quality management systems that had to be [put] in place (4:72).
>
> We have questionnaires that the students have to fill in - what are the problems that they experience in class…you can alter …your approach (4:72).
>
> …we expect specifically the facilitators to write reports …We do evaluations at the workshops and the project manager would …talk to participants in the workshop (4:72).
>
> …the implementation [of quality assurance mechanisms] has already [enabled] a new mind set from all our lecturers…because it helps them to structure [their processes], it keeps them on track [and] that is a good thing (4:74).

A trade union indicated that they are aware of quality assurance requirements and that they are using it to the benefit of their members (5:19).

Therefore, despite the difficulties associated with lack of capacity and in many cases, the lack of support and guidance from ETQAs, providers feel that they have been treated fairly (4:73) and that they support the process:

> I am prepared to go the whole hog…we are taking the trouble to comply (4:73).
>
> I think the improvement of [quality assurance] is probably due to the accreditation criteria and the emphasis they place on [quality management] (4:65).

In addition, providers feel that being accredited gives a certain assurance of quality (4:65).

However, there is no doubt that providers are finding the development of quality assurance mechanisms time-consuming, bureaucratic, complex and difficult to achieve. The question dealing with the bureaucratic nature of attaining accreditation indicated that more than a third of respondents (35,3%) felt that the processes were causing problems, and a third each (31,7 % and 33,0%) of respondents indicated that they did not find it difficult, or that they did not know.

Different approaches to quality assurance (4:66), financial and resource requirements (4:66, 4:69), disbursement of Skills Development grants (4:70) and the cost of developing quality management systems (4:66) seem to be inhibiting. Uncertainty about the need for registration with the DoE is perceived to be problematic to providers when seeking accreditation:

> …we specifically do not want to [offer] a full qualification because [then] we have to go to the HEQC (CHE) and they [tell] you about the anomalies in the legislation - to deliver a full qualification, you have to be registered with the Department of Education (4:79).

The interpretation of the SAQA Act that all private providers need to be registered with the DoE before they can initiate an accreditation process seems to be particularly inhibiting. Some private FET providers noted with concern that the DoE seems to have placed a hold on the registration on such providers:

> …what is very worrying are the rumours that the Department of Education wants to put a hold on [the registration of] the independent service providers (4:86).

*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 |

A minimal/mixed rating has been given to *Quality assurance practices* because its impact is mixed. Most respondents indicated strong support for the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms, and indicated that the quality of education and training has improved because of them. But the operationalisation of quality assurance has been problematic. Most of the problems are associated with lack of capacity (mostly of ETQAs, but also of providers), contestation, overlapping of responsibilities, lack of meaningful MoUs, legislative anomalies and power struggles. The impact therefore cannot be considered 'minimal', because there is much evidence of support for the principle of quality assurance, but the problems associated with the implementation of quality assurance processes make it impossible to assign a rating of 'moderate' impact.

## Indicator 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

| | Disagree/ Strongly disagree | Agree/ Strongly agree | Don't know/ Too soon to say |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Employers* support *lifelong learning* and the empowerment of employees | 12,8% | 69,4% | 17,8% |
| *Providers* support *lifelong learning* and the empowerment of learners | 6,1% | 77,1% | 16,8% |
| Providers of education and training have become more *focused* on the needs of learners | 10,0% | 74,4% | 15,6% |
| The implementation of the NQF has led to an increased awareness of the need for *lifelong learning* | 5,7% | 77,8% | 16,5% |
| The implementation of the NQF has led to an increased awareness of the need for *career and learning pathing* | 5,1% | 77,5% | 17,4% |
| Changes in *institutional policy and practice* take place as a result of the implementation of the NQF | 6,9% | 66,1% | 27,0% |
| Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) provides *hope* for South African citizens | 4,2% | 76,2% | 19,6% |
| Citizens believe that new learning pathways offer *hope for a better future* | 4,4% | 74,0% | 21,6% |
| The *achievement* of NQF qualifications contributes to learners sense of *self-esteem* | 4,2% | 79,3% | 16,5% |
| Our organisation has provided NQF qualifications in other field/s that is/are *not the core function* of organisation | 18,9% | 49,4% | 31,6% |

Table 20: Survey responses for Indicator 16

More than two thirds of respondents (69,4%) indicated that they believe that employers support lifelong learning and the empowerment of employees. ETQAs, in particular, agree strongly that the empowerment of employees is increasingly taking place:

> There was nothing at our institutions. Nothing. Not a single quality. We didn't even have employment contracts at some of these institutions… Workplace skills plans…have been submitted. Lecturers are empowered. Even staff [at the lower end is] being placed in learnerships (2:31).

Moreover, most respondents believe that the NQF is becoming embedded in the education and training system and that qualifications are contributing to individuals' sense of self-esteem (79,3%) (2:31):

> …10 years from now you wouldn't believe, you couldn't think back that we ever had the old system…[there is] a difference in attitude, there is a difference of quality…there is a difference [in] curriculum (2:31).

However, a consistent response is that there has not been enough advocacy of the NQF (2:31; 4:82), in respect of both learners and employers.

Most respondents believed that providers of education and training support lifelong learning and that the NQF has contributed to an awareness of lifelong learning (77,1%). A respondent noted for example:

> People are not excited about the NQF because of policy…it is more a case of 'I can write my name, I can read', and this is how [they] get on this path of [lifelong learning] of the NQF. 'I want to read, so that I can read my Bible, I want to write so [that] I can get my pension'…they are more excited about the policy in practice, than about the policy itself (3:45).

Likewise, a substantial number of respondents (74,4%) believe that providers are more responsive to the needs of learners:

> The NQF processes is a guideline…it guides us to provide quality in training and then to ensure that the training programmes we produce…are in line with the norms and standards set …if we are following the NQF processes, we …[produce] quality, not quantity (3:45).

An even larger number of respondents (77,5%) indicated that the awareness has led to the need for career and learning pathing and that the NQF is the foundation for other national strategies (3:45). It is perhaps still too soon to say, but it seems as if the system is underpinned by good policies:

> …[what is] working, is the 'spirit of the NQF'. I think the legislation works well…whether companies apply it properly, that's another matter. But I think the framework has been set up, and those who make use of it…gain from it. We had a long history of not providing quality education for everybody (4:84)

Two thirds of respondents (66,1%) also believe that institutional policies and practice are changing as a result of the implementation of the NQF. Even in the job market, NQF qualifications are becoming a requirement:

> …we are beginning to see many adverts …talking about SAQA, level 'X' qualifications; it's becoming a requirement (3:46).

RPL is considered very important - most respondents (76,2%) believe that it holds great promise (3:45) but that it has not yet been implemented sufficiently (3:45). Nevertheless, implementation is essential in order to 'get the fundamental principles of the NQF working' (4:85- 87).

Almost three quarters of respondents (74,0%) indicated that learning pathways were increasingly contributing to a better future and that education and training is having an impact on society:

> …these youngsters are rough…very rough, we are talking about guys dying…[T]o address [these issues] we have to show the guy 'hey, look, you are special' and we find they look [at us] as father figures…I mean one guy invited me to his wedding …I trained him four years ago (4:82).

*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 |

*Organisational, economic and societal benefits* has been rated with high positive impact. Most respondents agreed with the questions posed to them (up to 79% in some cases). It was noted, amongst others, that institutional policies and practices have changed and learning pathways had improved. Awareness of the NQF structures was very high. There was also a high degree of expectation and hope that the system was going to work. Some concerns regarding the need for more advocacy, tension between the Departments and the unresolved reviews were also raised.

It is furthermore recommended that this Impact Indicator be separated into three separate indicators to allow for distinct focus on each dimension (see the findings in Chapter 2).

## Indicator 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 (HRD), National Skills Development (NSD) strategies and Tirisano

| Statement | Disagree/ Strongly disagree | Agree/Strongly agree | Don't Know/Too soon to say |
|---|---|---|---|
| The objectives of the NQF are aligned with the objectives of the national Human Resource Development Strategy | 4,9% | 63,5% | 31,6% |
| NQF implementation supports and contributes to a decrease in unemployment | 18,2% | 52,2% | 29,6% |
| NQF implementation supports and contributes to economic growth and the development of new economic opportunities | 7,2% | 69,9% | 22,8% |
| NQF implementation supports and contributes to reducing illiteracy | 2,8% | 79,1% | 18,1% |
| NQF implementation supports and contributes to the upskilling of the labour force | 3,9% | 79,4% | 16,7% |
| Life skills and HIV/AIDS awareness are improved through the completion of NQF qualifications | 14,2% | 58,3% | 27,5% |
| The NQF contributes to SADC and Africa collaboration | 6,4% | 48,1% | 45,5% |
| NQF qualifications improve employability and facilitate sustainable livelihoods of learners | 7,1% | 67,1% | 25,9% |
| NQF qualifications assist communities to take control of their socio-economic situations | 8,4% | 64,6% | 27,0% |
| NQF qualifications contribute to the achievement of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) targets | 3,6% | 72,3% | 24,2% |
| NQF qualifications contribute to the development of the capacity of self-employed individuals and small businesses (SMMEs) | 5,1% | 70,3% | 24,6% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The implementation of the NQF has facilitated policies emanating from the Dept of Education's (DoE's) Tirisano strategy | 4,0% | 62,2% | 33,9% |
| NQF qualifications have enabled the formal education system to be more relevant to the needs of learners | 9,4% | 72,9% | 17,7% |
| The costs involved in providing training are not adequately covered by the skills levy, hence only institutions with good profit margins can participate in this activity | 11,5% | 52,3% | 36,2% |

Table 21: Survey responses for Indicator 17

Responses received from surveys indicated that two-thirds of respondents felt the NQF was an important part of the national Human Resource Development Strategy (63,5%). Three quarters of respondents felt the NQF was an important part of the National Skills Development Strategy (72,3%).

For both of these strategies, however, between a quarter and a third of respondents felt it was too soon to say or that they did not know whether the NQF was an important part of these national strategies. Responses received as to whether the NQF facilitated policies emanating from the Department of Education's Tirisano strategy showed that almost two thirds of the respondents (62,2%) agreed with this. However, a third of the respondents (33,9%) felt that it was too soon to say or that they did not know.

An overwhelming majority of survey respondents felt that the NQF had made an impact by reducing illiteracy (79,1%) and the up-skilling of the labour force (79,4%). Almost three quarters of respondents (70,3%) felt that the NQF had contributed to building the capacity of SMMEs and the employability and sustainable livelihoods of learners (67,1%). Similarly, almost three quarters of respondents (72,9%) felt that NQF qualifications had enabled the formal education system to be more responsive to the needs of learners.

Just over half of the survey respondents (52,2%) felt that NQF implementation had made an impact on reducing unemployment. In terms of the NQF's contribution to economic growth and the development of new economic opportunities, almost three quarters of survey respondents (69,9%) felt that the NQF had made an impact.

Almost two thirds of the survey respondents felt that NQF qualifications had assisted communities to take control of their socio-economic situations (64,6%), although nearly a third of respondents (27,0%) felt that it was too soon to say or they didn't know. Fairly similar results were given for NQF qualifications improving awareness of HIV/AIDS and life skills, with over half of the respondents (58,3%) indicating that this had happened.

In response to the statement that the NQF contributes to SADC/Africa collaboration, almost half of the respondents (45,5%) indicated that they didn't know or that it was too soon to say.

Responses from interview respondents on the alignment of NQF objectives with the HRD objectives were varied. A trade union stated:

> …it [NQF] is very much seen as a relevant part of the HRD Strategy. From our own perspective it is critical (5:22).

An employer corroborated this view:

> HR …. walks hand in hand with skills development and we are linked to all of this (6:29).

A Department of Education respondent critiqued the HRD Strategy as having good intentions, but trying to do everything (3:46). A Department of Labour respondent agreed that there was a link between the HRD and NQF, but felt that this was not a coordinated approach that provided visible or tangible outputs (3:47).

There was general agreement in interview responses that the NQF contributed to the achievement of the National Skills Development Strategy. A Department of Labour respondent argued that:

> If there had been no NQF we could have continued, but there would have been no quality assurance….if the NQF is not there, then [the National Skills Development Strategy ] is a waste of time and it is business as usual. If we want to ensure redress, there has to be an NQF and there have to be ETQAs (3:48).

Another Department of Labour response stated:

> ….training is one of the pillars for building South Africa….I think it's going to take many years to sort it out properly and I wonder if we'll ever get there because it's like a shifting desert platform that you [are] working on. But I'm quite excited and I think [it] can work well (3:47).

An SMME employer disagreed that the NQF contributed to the achievement of the National Skills Development Strategy in stating:

> I think what we are doing is bluffing ourselves (6:29).

Responses from interview respondents did not support the statement that the implementation of the NQF facilitated policies emanating from the Department of Education's Tirisano policy. A Department of Education response noted:

> Tirisano was a brand….It went well for that era of 1999 to 2004 but now with the new Minister coming in, she's determining her own priorities…. All the work that was happening on Tirisano is happening. The work didn't stop; it's just that there's no mention (3:48).

A trade union response indicated:

> I don't know if the NQF is upholding the principles of Tirisano. How the NQF is delivered through providers is not necessarily linked to the DoE's policy, which is why one would not be able to link the government's policies to it, especially [as] private providers may not be aware of the principles contained in the Department's policy (5:22).

Limited qualitative evidence was found to corroborate the overwhelming majority view from survey respondents that the NQF had contributed to reducing illiteracy and up-skilling the labour force. A trade union and an employer had contrasting views on the up-skilling of the labour force:

> ….we [Labour] have become less involved and we lack capacity. A few union officials at top level sit in the SETA structure and information is not filtering down sufficiently…. [workers are] not sure what to do and they lose interest in the whole training possibility (5:22).

> Definitely. It [the NQF] is creating opportunities for people who did not have opportunities (6:29).

No qualitative evidence was found to corroborate the majority view of survey respondents that NQF implementation supports and contributes to economic growth and the development of new economic opportunities. Interview responses did not support the majority of survey responses that NQF qualifications have enabled the formal education system to be more responsive to the needs of learners. An ETQA stated:

> If the Department of Education won't accredit [a private provider] who trained at [NQF] level 5, so they can't operate at level 5 then (2:32).

An employer noted his personal frustration with the education system, as he felt that school learners were being worked too hard as a result of having to work with two different syllabuses (6:29).

Respondents interviewed sustained the majority view received from surveys that NQF implementation supports and contributes to a decrease in unemployment. An ETQA felt that this was possible:

> Opportunities could be developed for them to start small businesses (2:32).

An employer recorded their support for this statement:

> …we get unemployed people going on learnerships; they learn and they have the possibility of getting a permanent position, because they already have the knowledge (6:29).

Only one response was received on whether NQF implementation contributed to the development of the capacity of self-employed individuals and small businesses (SMMEs):

> My experience is that SMMEs are busy….they don't have time to entertain these issues of training, the issues of learnerships…the reason is that they are too busy to actually be involved in this paperwork (3:48).

No qualitative evidence was found to support responses from surveys that NQF implementation contributed to awareness of HIV/AIDS and life skills or for NQF implementation assisting communities to take control of their own socio-economic situations.

One response received on whether the NQF contributes to SADC and Africa collaboration stated:

> I don't think we compare very well with other countries in Africa….we are not part of Africa…We are very unpopular in Africa in some countries because we are very arrogant (3:48).

*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 on this indicator, *Contribution to other national strategies*, shows high positive impact. There is significant evidence that the NQF is perceived to be making a positive contribution to the achievement of national strategies. A minor exception to this case is the NQF's contribution to the Tirisano strategy, which is an internal Department of Education strategy and appears to be slightly outdated now. An overwhelming majority of positive responses was received for the NQF's contribution to reducing illiteracy and upskilling the labour force. Therefore, while there are areas where qualitative data does not support the survey findings, these do not undermine the overall high positive impact.

It should also be noted that as in the case of Indicator 11: *Assessment Practices*, there was a high incidence of responses that fell within the 'don't know' or 'it is too soon to say' category. This is an indication that the emerging system is still becoming embedded in daily practice.

However, on balance, the responses indicate high positive impact.