



Sponsored By The European Union
Under European Programme For
Reconstruction And Development



Integration, Portability and Articulation: Policy Symbolism or Policy Practice?

Lessons from the NQF Impact Study Cycle 2

Ronel Blom
Deputy Director: Research
South African Qualifications Authority

Overview

- Introduction
- Impact Study – key findings
- Levels of impact
- Portability and articulation
- An integrated approach
- Conclusion

Policy symbolism

- Three reviews:
 - Study Team, EU, Consultative Document
- ‘Revisit, revise, reverse’
- ‘Politicians do not always invent policy to change practice’
- ‘Policy symbolism, rather than the substance of change’
- Symbolic break from the past

Policy in practice

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.

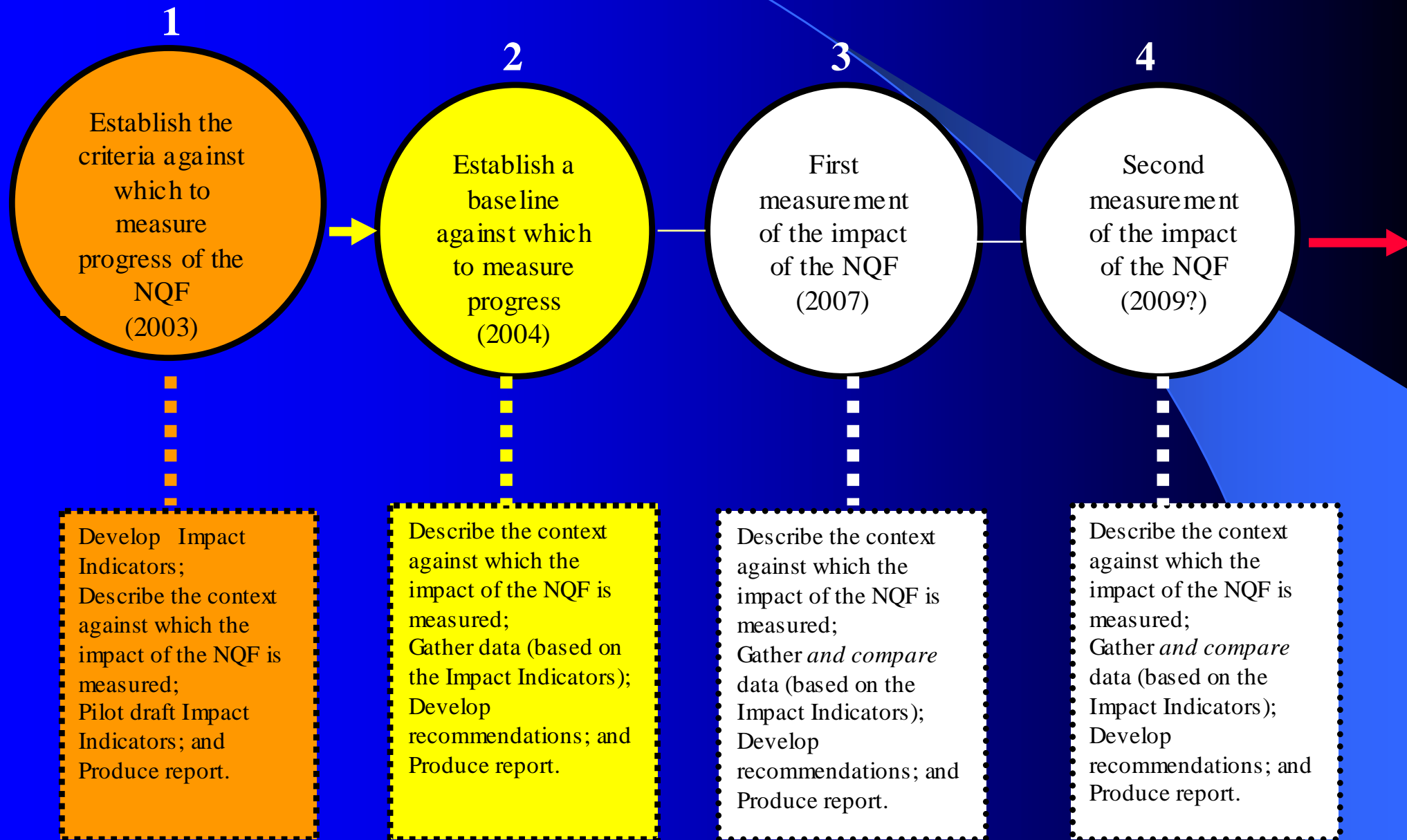
'I want to read, so that I can read my Bible, I want to write so [that] I can get my pension'...they are more excited about the policy in practice, than about the policy itself.

(SAQA, 2005:77)

Purpose of the NQF Impact Study

To achieve the effective measurement of
the impact of the NQF on the
transformation of education and training
in South Africa

NQF Impact Study Research Design



Cycle 1

(completed April 2004)

- Purpose:
 - Establish the criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF

Cycle 2

(completed March 2005)

- Purpose:
 - Establish a baseline against which to measure the progress of the NQF

Cycle 2: Data gathering

- 111 Interviews and 12 focus groups across nine provinces (Annexure 2 – 6)
- 77 also completed the survey questionnaire (Annexure 1)
- National survey questionnaire (outsourced) – 623 responses across nine provinces (Annexure 8)
- Categories: Providers, Businesses, Organised Labour, ETQAs, NSBs and SGBs, Government departments
- Qualitative NLRD analysis (outsourced) (Annexure 8)
- Quantitative NLRD analysis (Annexure 7)
- Relevant literature (Chapter 3)

The NQF objectives – the key reference point

- Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements
- Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths
- Enhance the quality of education and training
- Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities, and thereby
- Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large

A coherent, national approach

Here is a framework, which, if you use it well, will enable you to accomplish whatever it is that you [want to] do. So, if there is a coherent way in which one is able to assess what the human resource challenges and needs for the country are, then it's possible, by a framework of this kind, to plot the movement of people towards achieving what is required in terms of that strategy (SAQA, 2004: 27)

Cycle 2: Levels of impact

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| High positive | Research evidence shows a <i>marked positive</i> change across most of the education and training system |
| Moderate positive | Research evidence shows a <i>moderate positive</i> change across most of the education and training system |
| Minimal/mixed | Research evidence shows a <i>minimal and/or mixed</i> change across most of the education and training system |
| Negative | Research evidence shows a <i>marked negative</i> change across most of the education and training system |

Impact Indicators

1. **Number of qualifications**
2. **Effectiveness of qualifications design**
3. **Portability of qualifications**
4. **Relevance of qualifications**
5. **Qualifications uptake and achievement**
6. **Integrative approach**
7. **Equity of access**
8. **Redress practices**
9. **Nature of learning programmes**
10. **Quality of learning and teaching**
11. **Assessment practices**
12. **Career and learning pathing**
13. **Number of registered assessors and moderators**
14. **Number of accredited providers**
15. **Quality assurance practices**
16. **Organisational, economic and societal benefits**
17. **Contribution to other national strategies**

Cycle 2: Findings – High Positive

High positive

Research evidence shows a *marked positive* change across most of the education and training system

9. Nature of learning programmes

- high demand; outcomes-based approach; quality of learning programmes

16. Organisational, economic and societal benefits

- support for lifelong learning; learner-centred; institutional policy and practice; RPL

17. Contribution to other national strategies

- alignment with HRD strategy; reducing illiteracy; up-skilling of workforce; employability; NSD Strategy; SMME providers

Cycle 2: Findings – Moderate Positive



Moderate positive

Research evidence shows a *moderate positive* change across most of the education and training system

1. Number of qualifications

- 466 unit-std. based; 7710 non-unit std.; 8203 unit standards

4. Relevance of qualifications

- 80% agree on relevance; new and emerging fields of learning; responsive to work/industry/society

7. Equity of access

- greater access; RPL

10. Quality of learning and teaching

- responsive to the needs of learners; outcomes-based approach; professional development of practitioners

11. Assessment practices

- fairness, validity; quality, but workload and administration

12. Career and learning pathing

Cycle 2: Findings – Minimal/mixed

Minimal/mixed

Research evidence shows a *minimal and/or mixed* change across most of the education and training system

2. Effectiveness of qualification design
3. Portability of qualifications
5. Qualifications uptake and achievement
6. Integrative approach
8. Redress practices
13. Number of registered assessors and moderators
14. Number of accredited providers
15. Quality assurance practices

Cycle 2: Findings - Negative

Negative

Research evidence shows a *marked negative* change across most of the education and training system

'Too soon to say'

- Qualifications uptake and achievement
- Number of registered assessors and moderators
- Number of accredited providers
- Quality assurance practices

‘Impossible to achieve’

- Portability of qualifications
- Integrative approach
- Redress practices

Purposes of NQFs

- Addressing issues of social justice (SA)
- Improving access to the qualifications system and progression within it
- Establishing standards, achieving comparability and intra-national or international benchmarking (Tuck, et al, 2004)

Portability, articulation, integration

- Portability
 - Transfer credits from one learning context to another
- Articulation
 - Move between components of the delivery system
- Integration
 - A unifying approach to education and training

Three dimensions to 'portability'

- Instrumentalist/technicist
 - Design and structure of the framework, qualifications and unit standards
 - 'We need strong generic standards that can be used for various qualifications'
 - Credit accumulation and transfer
 - 'We need a credit matrix that is formalised and managed outside the institution's autonomy'
 - Commonly agreed standards that will make the value and equivalence explicit

Three dimensions: portability

- 'Institutional logic'
 - '...the opportunities, incentives, constraints...'
 - ...funding and regulatory requirements...
 - ...timetabling and resources...
 - ...status of fields of study...
 - ...influence of the labour market...
 - ...local agreements to encourage credit transfer...
 - ...surrounding policies and procedures...'
- (Raffe, 1994)

Three dimensions: portability

- Communities of trust:
- ‘We are stuck because institutions have not demonstrated willingness to recognise [the equivalence between institutions]...The issue of equivalence of institutions and the power play between the institutions is a disadvantage to the learners’.
- Parity of esteem
- ‘Communities of [trust or practice] with shared experience’ (Young, 2003)

We need both...

- Design and structural features of the framework, qualifications and unit standards
- The development and building of trust in the application of agreed standards in communities of practice

An integrated approach

- The first objective of the NQF
- ‘...there is general concern that the integration of education and training has not been achieved’ (Study Team)
- ‘lack of common understanding’ (Heyns and Needham)

Three dimensions: an integrated approach

- Macro level: political contestation
 - Meso level: epistemological concerns
 - Micro level:
 - The integration of theory and practice
 - Partnerships
 - Application of theory
- ‘The persuasive logic locked in daily practice’?
(Jansen, 2004)

Conclusion

- The South African NQF is a 'social construct':
- 'The essential nature of the NQF is that of a social construct, in that we as social actors in society not only theorise about, construct and implement it, but we also enable, actively change, or work against it' (Isaacs, 2001)
- Given the support for the NQF, how can we enhance integration, portability and articulation?

Conclusion

- Ask the hard questions:
 - Are we serious about this policy reform?
 - Resources, plans, timeframes, contexts, support, personnel, obstacles, impediments, benefits?
 - What kind of consequences result from non-implementation? (Jansen, 2004)
- Understand the evolving system:
 - Clarify the meanings, objectives of integration
 - Clarify the barriers
 - Ensure the objectives are achievable – progress in stages

Achievable or intractable?

- Internationally – portability, articulation and integration are ‘difficult to solve, alleviate or cure’ (Collins, 1985)
- Have we done enough of the ‘hard thinking’? (Jansen, 2004)
- Is the NQF a symbol?
 - ...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 in quality...there is a difference [in] curriculum’



Thank you!
Ronel Blom
SAQA

rblom@saqa.co.za