

UMALUSI COUNCIL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A VISION FOR POST-SCHOOL AND POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION

November 2009

PUBLISHED BY



Council for Quality Assurance in
General and Further Education and Training

37 General Van Ryneveld Street, Persequor Technopark, Pretoria
Telephone: 27 12 3491510 • Fax: 27 12 3491511
Email: Info@umalusi.org.za • Web: www.umalusi.org.za

COPYRIGHT 2009 UMALUSI COUNCIL FOR
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN GENERAL AND FURTHER
EDUCATION AND TRAINING. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Contents

1. Executive summary	2
2. Introduction and overview	4
3. Terminology and concepts	6
4. Umalusi's vision for a post-school, post-literacy, and post-compulsory education and training system	7
5. The work Umalusi has undertaken thus far in respect of this sector	9
5.1 Proposals in respect of qualifications and curricula	9
5.2 Proposals in respect of quality assurance of provision	11
6. Emerging solutions: systematization of the Adult and Vocational Education and Training (AVET) sector	14
7. Recommendations	16
7.1 Recommendations in respect of quality assurance	16
7.2 Recommendations in respect of qualifications	17
7.3 Recommendations in respect of institutions	18
7.4 Recommendations in respect of systematization of the AVET sector	19
7.5 Recommendations in respect of assessment	19
7.6 Recommendations in respect of funding	20
8. References	21

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 With the promulgation of the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 2008), the status of Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (herein after referred to as 'the Council') changed from an Education and Training Quality Assurance Body to a Quality Council (QC).
- 1.2 The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act and the amended General and Further Education and Training (GENFET) Quality Assurance Act (Act No. 58 of 2001) determine the Council's mandate, and have a bearing on: qualifications; quality assurance; information; research; advice to the Minister; and collaboration with other QCs.
- 1.3 Recognizing that the education and training Acts may have to be amended as a result of the split of the Ministry of Education into two Ministries, namely, Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, Umalusi has nevertheless prepared itself for the role of a QC, principally in respect of its approach to standard setting (the interrelatedness of qualifications, curriculum, provision, assessment and research), and its role in the post-compulsory, post-literacy, and post-schooling sector.
- 1.4 This paper discusses Umalusi's understanding of concepts such as post-literacy, post-compulsory, and post-school education.
- 1.5 *Umalusi's vision for post-literacy, post-compulsory schooling, and post-school system is:*
 - 1.5.1 A single, coherent system which encompasses public and private provision and collaborates with the QC for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) and the Council on Higher Education in respect of their respective sub-frameworks of qualifications.
 - 1.5.2 A sector where the false divisions between adult and further education, as well as further and higher education are removed. The qualifications in the sector should reflect a continuum of learning.
 - 1.5.3 A post-school sector that is more akin to further education than higher education, wherein Umalusi and other QCs work together in 'zones of mutual trust'.
 - 1.5.4 A sector providing accessible alternatives to out-of-school youth and post-literacy adults with a broad and diverse range of offerings and qualifications from NQF 1 – NQF 5; and one where no learner is turned away.
 - 1.5.5 A system in which the learner, not the institution, is funded; in fact, the development of an alternative funding model that will make optimum use of resources, including the National Skills Fund.

- 1.5.6** In short, Umalusi's vision is for a post-school education and training system that will take care of out-of-school youth and adults, both employed and unemployed, including learners in adult education and training, further education and training, and education after schooling.
- 1.6** The draft GENFET Sub-framework of qualifications makes provision for qualifications for post-literacy adults and school drop-outs (NQF levels 2 and 3), youth who have failed or passed with poor results at matric level (NQF level 4) and post-school vocational qualifications (NQF level 5).
- 1.7** It is the view of the Council that *all* private and public institutions offering adult and vocational education and training should be subject to Umalusi's quality assurance measures. Currently, while Umalusi is active within the private provider domain in respect of institutional quality assurance, the Council's quality assurance authority over public institutions is severely constrained and should be strengthened.
- 1.7.1** An emerging solution to deal with a disparate sector which reflects highly variable standards of teaching, learning, and assessment across private and public institutions is to systematize the sector.
- 1.7.2** To this end Umalusi has commenced with the establishment of an Adult and Vocational Education and Training (AVET) Provider Forum which has as its objectives to: establish a convener system whereby experts from within the sector contribute towards qualification and curriculum development; participate in peer evaluation of institutions; and to set examinations and assessments against a common core curriculum.
- 1.7.3** A number of task teams have been established to give effect to the convener system, including an assessment committee for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and a qualifications task team for the description of a vocational qualification which will meet the needs of the target group under discussion in this paper.
- 1.7.4** The task teams are supported by research undertaken to compare qualifications on the draft framework, e.g., the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and National Certificate: Vocational (NCV), as well as comparing these qualifications with others in the sector.
- 1.8 Recommendations**
- 1.8.1** Umalusi's quality assurance oversight must be strengthened and extended in the public system catering for the extended group under discussion, in particular in relation to public Further Education and Training (FET) colleges and Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs).
- 1.8.2** The regulation of Umalusi's framework of qualifications should be finalized as a matter of urgency, particularly in respect of the NQF level 5 qualifications, which will serve as a zone of mutual trust between the QCs. The GENFET

framework of qualifications reflects a continuum of learning with clear articulation between and progression routes amongst the adult, vocational, and academic variants and seeks to find synergies with the QCTO and Higher Education Qualifications frameworks.

- 1.8.3** FET institutions should become institutions of choice by establishing a strong identity for further education and training and by opening up opportunities for out-of-school youth, post-literacy learners, and unemployed and working adults.
- 1.8.4** The range of offerings at these institutions must be substantially expanded to reflect the diversity of qualifications on the Umalusi draft sub-framework.
- 1.8.5** The highly disparate public and private AVET sector urgently needs to be reconceptualized as representing one single, coherent sector.
- 1.8.6** Externally set and administered examinations and/or assessment are still the most reliable and cost-effective forms of large-scale assessment. Umalusi is of the opinion that the credibility and validity of certificates hinge on the extent to which credible external examinations and/or assessments have been conducted.
- 1.8.7** Umalusi's approach to standard setting extends to the internationally recognized methodology of developing pre-standardized assessment items. Umalusi will progressively steer external examinations/assessment in this direction, including making available assessment-on-demand, as appropriate.
- 1.8.8** In addition, Umalusi recommends innovative approaches to setting standards for the sector, e.g., through making use of a convener system that will draw expertise from the sector, including expertise in respect of assessment and examinations.
- 1.8.9** The funding of the sector needs serious reconsideration in order to make optimum use of resources, including the National Skills Fund.

2. Introduction and overview

With the promulgation of the NQF Act (Act No. 67 of 2008), Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training's status changed from an Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) responsible for the NQF band of levels 1 to 4, to a QC, responsible for the sector offering institutional learning at these levels. With the new status came an extended mandate.

Umalusi's mandate is now determined by two Acts, namely, the NQF Act; and the amended GENFET Quality Assurance Act (Act No. 58 of 2001, as amended in 2008). These two Acts have a bearing on the following areas of responsibility:

2.1 Qualifications

Umalusi must develop and manage a sub-framework of qualifications; develop and implement policy and criteria for the registration and publication of such qualifications and ensure that they are internationally comparable; develop qualifications and part qualifications as necessary for the sector; recommend qualifications and part qualifications to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) for registration on the NQF; and, develop and implement policy and criteria for assessment, recognition of prior learning, and credit accumulation and transfer.

2.2 Quality assurance

Develop and implement policy for quality assurance as is necessary for the sub-framework, including quality assurance of provision (private institutions such as independent schools, FET colleges, adult centres, and assessment bodies); quality assurance of assessment (exit assessments and site-based continuous assessment for both public and private schools, FET colleges, and adult learning centres); quality assurance of qualifications and curriculum; and certification of learner achievements.

2.3 Information

Umalusi must maintain a database of learner achievements and related matters; and submit such data in a format determined in consultation with SAQA for recording on the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD).

2.4 Research

Umalusi must conduct or commission and publish research on issues of importance to the development and implementation of the sub-framework.

2.5 Advice and collaboration




Umalusi must advise the relevant Minister on matters relating to its sub-framework; collaborate with SAQA and other QCs in terms of the education and training system; establish cooperative relationships with professional bodies; and inform the public about the sub-framework.

However, while the NQF Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) came into effect on the 1st of June 2009, the provisions of the NQF Act cannot be fully implemented as presently formulated due to the split of the Ministry of Education into a Ministry of Higher Education and Training (HE&T) and the Ministry of Basic Education, and it seems necessary that the NQF Act and other amended Acts may have to be redrafted/ amended. In addition, with the concurrent shift of responsibility for the QCTO and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) from the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of HE&T, the Skills Development and related Acts may also have to be adjusted.

This situation presents an opportunity for greater alignment of a suite of Acts in the education and training arena and for a reconsideration of the roles and scope of work of the different statutory bodies. Specifically, it is important that Umalusi's role is clarified and strengthened in the light of the fact that the work of the Council now straddles the two Ministries.

Nevertheless, with the long lead up to the finalization of the review of the NQF, Umalusi has taken on much preparatory work for its new role as a QC and, while Umalusi's position is currently quite ambiguous, the Council believes it is in the unusual position of being able to serve the education and training system in a unique manner, on account of the range of work it has done since its inception in 2001. Specifically, Umalusi's emerging approach to standard setting, namely the setting and interrogation of standards for qualification and curriculum, provision and assessment, has won much support in terms of the establishment and maintenance of standards for education.

While Umalusi has a broader mandate in respect of general schooling, mainstream schooling (public and private) will not be discussed in this paper. In a sense, the schooling sector has stabilized and is subject to well-established practices. In the last 18 months it was therefore possible for Umalusi to focus on the most neglected area of the education system. This paper will therefore discuss:

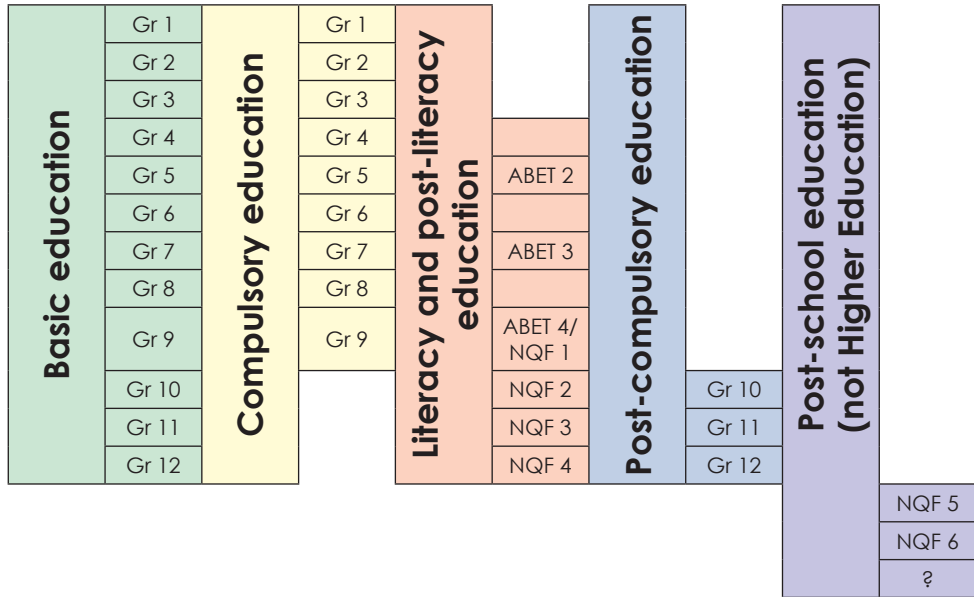
-  Umalusi's vision for a post-school, post-literacy, and post-compulsory education and training system as it relates to Adult Education and Training (AET) centres and FET colleges and NQF levels 1 – 5.
-  The work Umalusi has undertaken thus far in respect of this sector.
-  Emerging solutions: systematization of the sector and Umalusi's role within the sector.

3. Terminology and concepts

With the implementation of the NQF came a host of new terms and concepts (and abbreviations!). One of the terms relevant to this discussion is FET. How the South African system and public came to understand FET is anomalous with international practice (and even with practice in this country prior to the implementation of the NQF). FET in South Africa is currently limited to levels 2 – 4 of the NQF, while elsewhere in the world, FET is seen to encompass post-school, post-literacy, and post-compulsory education and training, that is, education at NQF levels 1 up to, and including at least level 5 (and possibly beyond) of the NQF.

With the introduction of two ministries for education after the April 2009 election, the understanding of FET has become even more opaque. On the one hand, the Ministry of Basic Education clearly intends to deal with formal schooling up to and including Grade 12 (or levels 1 – 4 of the NQF) – in other words, incorporating both General and Further Education in our current understanding. On the other hand, the Ministry of HE&T has been given the responsibility for public and private FET colleges and adult learning centres, as well as those providers offering workplace-based education and training on behalf of the SETAs, also including levels 1 – 4 (and beyond) of the NQF. It therefore seems necessary to delineate, at least for this discussion, how Umalusi understands this area (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Basic, compulsory, literacy and post-literacy, post-compulsory, and post-school education



This paper is concerned with the apricot-, blue- and lilac-shaded areas. Post-literacy education is included in the discussion as it is a logical extension of current ABET (please refer to the Framework later). Presently in South Africa, adult learning is primarily associated with ABET, which is contrary to what Umalusi aims to achieve, namely, to enable any learner (adult or otherwise) to embark on a meaningful learning pathway. At present it is very difficult, if not impossible, for adults who have achieved a General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), or some Learning Area Certificates, to progress into further learning.

4. Umalusi’s vision for a post-literacy, post-compulsory schooling, and post-school education and training system

Despite South Africa's significant gains in improving access to education for all its children, there is a large (and growing) cohort of young people between the ages of 16 and 24, who are *not in education, employment, or training* (the so-called NEET youth as this group is described in the United Kingdom). While the problems of these young people can be ascribed to South Africa's current socio-economic and past political conditions, the fact that—despite the many interventions (such as learnerships, an improved public FET sector (the old Technical Colleges), and Extended Public Works Programmes, for example—many) young people are still unable to participate in meaningful education and training, seems to suggest that these interventions

have not yet impacted sufficiently on the scale of the challenge. Many scholars and organisations have noted that this may be a result of the lack of a more accessible and flexible post-schooling, post-literacy, and post-compulsory education sector. Since appropriate education and training is seen to improve the life chances of this group, (Lolwana, 2009) it is incumbent on the government and its statutory bodies to respond to this need.

Umalusi is of the view that a vibrant, flexible, and diverse post-literacy, post-compulsory schooling, and post-school education sector would provide alternative, achievable opportunities to the so-called NEET youth, as well as to post-literacy adults. Umalusi's vision for this sector includes:

- 👉 A single, coherent post-literacy, post-compulsory, and post-schooling system which encompasses public and private provision and which is jointly quality assured by Umalusi and the QCTO (as appropriate).
- 👉 A broad and diverse sector where the principle of 'turn no-one away' is key, i.e., curricula and programmes that will accommodate any learner and will provide meaningful progression routes and learning pathways regardless of a learner's prior education.
- 👉 A system whereby *the learner* is funded, not the institution, making it possible for both public and private institutions to compete for students; giving the National Department of Education (DoE) more control over private colleges; and unifying the sector through a national bursary scheme funded from the National Skills Fund. In addition, Umalusi's funding model should include a quality assurance levy in order to reduce reliance on certification fees.

Importantly, in envisaging the post-school sector in particular, there is recognition that such a sector is more akin to further education than higher education (in the sense of university study). Therefore, Umalusi has, as shown in Figure 1 above, broadened the definition of FET to include post-compulsory, post-literacy, and post-school education, which will lead up to, and overlap with the first levels of Higher Education (HE) at level 5¹ in a 'zone of mutual trust'². This is because, if the false divides between general education and training (GET), including general education for adults (the GETC), and FET; and FET and higher education and training (HET) are reconceptualised as a continuum of learning pathways, Umalusi believes that more young people, in particular the vulnerable NEET cohort, could be accommodated. Further, reconceptualising FET in this manner will be more in keeping with the international recognition that there are no tidy divisions between the 'bands' of the education and training system to match the quality assurance intentions of such a system (as was done in South Africa): it is the purposes of and continuities between qualifications and the progression pathways that ought to determine which bodies take responsibilities for a particular part of the system.

Umalusi is responsible for the sector where two key transition points in education and training occur: from GET to FET and from FET to HET. It is at these two transition points

¹ And possibly 6, that is, at pre-graduate studies level

² An area of overlap with HE with defined and agreed articulation and progression pathways

where the greatest attrition of youth occurs. The school system seems able to keep the majority of learners up until the end of Grade 9, but between the start of Grade 10 and the end of Grade 12, a massive erosion of numbers take place: the Ministerial report, *Learner retention in the South African schooling system* (Department of Education, 2008), indicates, by way of example that, for the cohort of people born between 1980 and 1984, just more than 46% reached Grade 12. Thus, for every school-leaver who exits with a matric certificate, there is at least one other person who has left the system before that time. The greatest attrition rates are between Grade 10 and 11 (over 200 000) and Grade 11 and 12 (more than 500 000). In addition, traditionally, approximately 15% of matriculants have passed sufficiently well to gain access to HE (in 2008, this percentage was 18% and, in 2009, HE institutions have struggled to accommodate the additional influx.) Nevertheless, the remaining 85% of matriculants, and all of those who did not get that far, are released into the economy as underprepared young adults, the majority of which will not be fortunate enough to be employed—at least not for a considerable number of years.

It is therefore clear that the education and training system lacks appropriate and accessible alternatives for the young people that have completed compulsory schooling but have dropped out en route to matric, or indeed for those adults who have achieved literacy, but have very poor prospects of progressing further up into the education system. The system also needs to make provision for second chance learners, that is, for those people who have remained in school until Grade 12, but who have either failed, or fared so poorly that they cannot access any further learning and/or employment.

5. The work Umalusi has undertaken thus far in respect of this sector

Umalusi has, in keeping with its extended mandate, approached these challenges in three ways: proposing alternative qualifications, curricula, and assessment models; changing its approach to the quality assurance of provision; and, making a start in the systematizing of the private AVET sector (FET and AET institutions).

5.1 Proposals in respect of qualifications and curricula

Since 2006, the State has introduced at least one alternative for those learners who exit general schooling at levels prior to Grade 12: the NCV. However, while the first level 4 exit examination will only be conducted at the end of 2009, it is already evident that the NCV cannot meet all the needs of the NEET cohort³. Further, while there are many reasons why young people exit school, once they have left, it is very difficult for them to return. This means that if they fail to achieve the NCV4, they have nowhere else, educationally-speaking, to go.

It is for this, and the post-matric, group that Umalusi has conceptualized, as part of its sub-framework of qualifications, additional opportunities outside of school and formal university HE. Umalusi also considers that this is the space where Umalusi

³ In fact, the NCV may be better placed in technical schools, rather than at FET colleges

as a QC and the QCTO could most meaningfully collaborate in respect of the development of linked qualification pathways.

These opportunities include: (1) post-literacy adult education that will enable adults to progress through FET and beyond (the Elementary and Intermediate Certificates, see Table 1: the Qualifications Sub-framework proposed by Umalusi, p **); (2) an alternative matric for out-of-school youth for 'second-chance' and young adult learners (the NSC for Adults or out-of-school youth); and (3) post-compulsory and post-school vocational qualifications to be offered at FET colleges (starting from the Elementary Certificate through to the Further Certificate).

Table 1: The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework (November 2009)

NQF level	Qualification types and qualifications					Certificates for units of learning
Level 1: Qualification type	General Certificate (GC)					Unit of learning (subject) certificates for adult learners
Designated variants	General Education Certificate (GEC), at Grade 9	General Certificate of Education (Adult) (GCE (Adult))	General Certificate of Education and Training (Adult) (GCET (Adult))			
Level 2: Qualification type	Elementary Certificate (EC)					Unit of learning certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants
Designated variant	(Grade 10)	(National Certificate (Vocational) 2)	N1	Elementary Certificate		
Level 3: Qualification	Intermediate Certificate (IC)					Unit of learning certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants
Designated variants	(Grade 11)	(National Certificate (Vocational) 3)	N2	Intermediate Certificate		
Level 4: Qualification	National Certificate (NC)					Unit of learning certificates towards one or more qualification designated variants
Designated variants	(Grade 12) National Senior Certificate (NSC)	National Senior Certificate for Adults (NSCA) / National Senior Certificate for Out-of-school candidates (NSCOC)	National Certificate (Vocational) 4)	N3	Independent National Certificate	
Level 5: Qualification	Further Certificate (FC)					
Designated variants		National Certificate (Vocational) 5	N4 N5 N6	Further Independent Certificate	Unit of learning certificates	

The shaded areas are the new qualifications being proposed and where Umalusi sees its collaboration with the QCTO's Occupational Qualifications Framework (OQF) and the HE Qualifications Framework (as appropriate to the purpose of the qualification).

These qualifications will be based on centrally developed core curricula, will be offered by institutions quality assured by Umalusi, and will be externally assessed.

In addition, there could be multiple purposes for these qualifications, particularly at level 5. These qualifications could address the needs of those individuals who want to strengthen indifferent school achievements; who need bridging into formal university education; or, who need parallel (to HE) level 5/6 *vocational qualifications* (as opposed to academic qualifications).

Further, it is not only the youth described in this paper that could benefit from an extension of post-secondary options which are not directly university-related. This suite of qualifications hopes to provide opportunities to (working) adults as well.

Umalusi has already initiated exploratory work in respect of qualification and curriculum development (discussed in section 6 – convener system).

5.2 Proposals in respect of the quality assurance of provision

The institutions offering qualifications and programmes in what is currently termed GENFET, can be grouped into four distinct, but overlapping, sectors, namely: (1) public and private AET centres (including PALCs); (2) private FET institutions; (3) public FET colleges; and, (4) private providers accredited by the SETAs.

While under the current legislation there is a distinction between Adult Education (primarily associated with ABET) and FET, this false divide perpetuates and entrenches the lack of progression opportunities between general and further education (NQF level 1, transitioning into level 2 and beyond). For this reason, Umalusi has collapsed (at least internally) the two sectors into one – calling it the AVET sector. This is in recognition that adults may not only need literacy education, but may want to progress to further levels in their learning. In addition, limiting adult education to ABET reduces the possibilities for young adults to re-enter the system at levels lower than NQF level 4 in order to 'catch up' and proceed towards a second chance to obtain a matric or an alternative vocational qualification, including a post-school qualification (see draft framework above – qualifications at levels 2 and 3 particularly provide for such a group).

The private FET sector is a large and diverse sector (a guesstimate of 700 000 learners at more than 4 000 sites (Akojee, 2005)). Traditionally it has been highly responsive, and its qualifications, particularly its post-school opportunities, were almost universally recognizable and had currency in workplaces. With the advent of regulation, this sector has become more constrained, and, in order to continue to offer both post-compulsory and post-schooling education, has had to meet the requirements of the HE Quality Committee (HEQC), Umalusi, and the SETA ETQAs. Nevertheless, private FET is still a vibrant alternative for many young people who have had poor passes or who have failed matric. In addition, this sector has, through its flexible modes of delivery, been able to accommodate multiple target groups in terms of both face-to-face and distance education, or mixed mode

approaches to teaching and learning. Umalusi is directly responsible for the quality assurance of this sector through its accreditation process.

The public FET sector has recently received a very necessary injection in the form of the recapitalization of the colleges and the introduction of the NCV with its concurrent funding and bursary schemes. However, this sector is also known for its rigidity, its slowness to respond to identified needs, and, with the removal of the National Technical Education (NATED) (N1 – N6) programmes, it is in danger of losing much of its traditional student population – a population that typifies the post-compulsory and post-schooling group. In addition, the public FET sector is hemorrhaging vocational teachers, possibly because the NCV requires much stronger academic grounding, as well as skills in delivery and assessment of the practical component of the subjects offered, than those which were required for the N-courses. Many DoE interventions notwithstanding, such interventions by and large merely touched upon procedural management of the new qualification and did not take into account both the academic depth in the subjects to be taught and the necessary pedagogy and subject didactics needed.

Moreover, in terms of quality assurance, while the FET colleges are subject to monitoring by provincial DoEs, as well as the National DoE, Umalusi does not currently have a direct quality assurance role at these institutions. Except for periodic monitoring visits in respect of the assessment system (and in 2006 – 2008, Umalusi undertook site visits in respect of the implementation and evaluation of the assessment system for the NCV) Umalusi's quality assurance at colleges is limited – a matter that needs urgent reconsideration in the light of the poor performance of learners enrolled on the NCV, and the need to create a responsive sector.

The final role player in this sector is the providers that fall under the auspices of the SETAs offering workplace-based education and training. They are often highly focused on a particular field of learning, but are subject to very difficult, disparate, and often inappropriate, quality assurance measures. They are also generally not known for their quality of teaching, learning, and assessment, given that they have to offer unit standards-based qualifications that do not have core curricula and syllabi, and which consequently may reflect a highly variable standard in respect of teaching and assessment.

Nevertheless, while the SETA workplace providers fall outside of Umalusi's quality assurance scope, Umalusi has some insight into private colleges offering SETA qualifications, and could play a bigger role in respect of quality assurance, particularly in partnership with the QCTO. However, as noted above, while Umalusi can assist at private colleges, it is constrained in respect of its quality assurance of public FET colleges that offer SETA qualifications.

Therefore, in terms of provision and programme delivery, Umalusi is currently responsible for the quality assurance of only **private** adult and further education and training institutions that have sought accreditation with Umalusi.

Nevertheless, in reconceptualizing its quality assurance approach, Umalusi considered the public system as part and parcel of its mandate and will continue

to include public colleges in all its deliberations⁴ (this matter is further discussed in section 6 – the systematization of the sector).

As far as SETA-accredited providers are concerned, it is clear that the new QCTO will take responsibility for quality assurance at such sites, but there are, as noted above, nevertheless opportunities for Umalusi and the QCTO to take hands in the quality assurance of linked qualifications (qualifications that may lead to artisan-status and such-like).

Umalusi's quality assurance approach is based on its vision for institutions that will fill the post-school, post-literacy, and post-compulsory education gap. Such institutions should be highly responsive to the community and the target groups they intend to serve; they should be flexible enough to accommodate a diverse student population through the types and levels of qualifications and curricula on offer; they should offer appropriate student support in line with their programme offerings and the needs of learners (academic support, work placement, counseling, etc.); they should offer a range of progression routes from NQF level 1 through to NQF level 5 (and 6); and, should employ highly knowledgeable teaching staff (or develop their staff, as appropriate).

Following are the indicators Umalusi will use in future to encourage the development of a vibrant post-school, post-literacy, and post-compulsory education sector (from the draft *Framework for Accreditation of Education Institutions and Assessment Bodies in General and Further Education and Training* (Umalusi, 2009a), which is awaiting regulation by the Minister). The indicators form the basis for a set of quantitative and qualitative criteria against which public and private FET institutions will be measured:

- i. Mission-directed leadership and management** criteria are concerned with the extent to which the milieu facilitates and strengthens attainment the institution's vision and mission, as these are informed by its legal framework and context, as well as by national priorities. Other criteria relate to strategic leadership and effective governance structures and strategies, and the effectiveness with which the qualification mix and provision is selected, planned, managed, quality assured, and improved. Resources must be appropriately allocated and used to ensure that the institution is viable and sustainable. The vision and mission must also reflect the institutional commitment to the establishment of the required infrastructure and processes to ensure quality provision and to monitoring and evaluation in order to improve quality.
- ii. Teaching and training** criteria entail evaluation of the enactment of the curriculum and how this must reflect appropriate instructional approaches that support learning in respect of the qualifications the institution will be accredited to offer, as well as the development of suitable learning programmes and materials in support of these qualifications.

⁴ However, the participation of public colleges in these deliberations has been very poor

- iii. Learning and assessment** criteria are honed towards evaluation of the delivery of the curriculum. It should be evident that staff development and proficiency in respect of teaching and assessment should be consonant with learner profiles and the purpose and context of the qualifications offered at AET centres and/or FET colleges.
- iv. Learner support** criteria will be used to assess academic guidance and support, financial support (if appropriate), work placement and the tracking of graduates; and the availability of articulation and progression routes for learners. Support functions must also include physical resources and efficient management of programme delivery on- and off-site, as required. In addition, flexible delivery modes should be made available to open up access to education and training.
- v. Achievement and results** criteria encapsulate the analyses of quantitative and qualitative data such as learner attainments, access rates, learner retention rates, learner progression, and placement rates to improve learner success. This information should also be used to track learner achievement.

6. Emerging solutions: systematizing the Adult and Vocational Education and Training (AVET) Sector

As noted earlier, the sector best suited to meet the needs of post-school, post-literacy, and post-compulsory education youth and adults, is highly disparate and currently subject to many different and divergent quality assurance measures. This sector consists of a multitude of public and private, large and small, single-sited and multi-sited institutions, including workplace learning sites, each of which largely functions on its own. In the light of the important role this sector should play in providing alternatives to young people with poor results, and adults who need post-literate and second chance opportunities, and of alleviating the youth unemployment crisis, it is crucial that the sector is drawn into a single, coherent system.

For this reason, Umalusi is in the process of establishing an AVET Provider Forum which includes the public and private Adult and FET sectors (and the SETA ETQA providers as appropriate). The idea is that the sector itself participates in the development and delivery of qualifications, curricula, and internal and external assessment in response to the needs of the target group.

In March 2009, at the Umalusi AVET Forum, delegates from the sector elected a Steering Committee, which has started some exploratory work. The AVET Provider Forum therefore seeks to systematize the AVET sector in that the member institutions would offer the qualifications identified on the GENFET Framework. These qualifications (see Table 1) will have core curricula which will be externally examined/assessed and will be subject to Umalusi's normal quality assurance procedures. In this way, the highly variable quality of provision in the sector will become standardized and given national status.

The most important mechanism Umalusi is using to systematize and standardize qualification development and assessment (internal and external) for the sector is a convener system, similar to the kind of system used by Technikons in the past whereby experts from the sector itself contribute to curriculum development and assessment.

Umalusi has initiated a number of small pilot projects to 'test the waters' so to speak. The first is the establishment of an assessment committee that will be developing examination papers for the low stakes ABET level 3 examinations with the purpose to craft a broader approach for the whole of the sector, but also to: (1) improve the standard of internal and external assessment in that sector; (2) capacitate the sector in terms of the drafting of examination papers of a comparable standard; and, (3) concurrently, initiate curriculum development for the GETC.

Secondly, a small task team has been established to describe a new vocational qualification proposed on the GENFET sub-framework, focusing on a qualification that will address the needs of the NEET youth, post-literate, and working adults (see Table 1). A first draft of an NQF level 4 certificate has been concluded. This will be expanded to include related qualifications at the lower levels (levels 2 and 3), as well as a higher level (level 5). The description of this new vocational qualification includes the rationale, purpose, and target market for the qualification, as well as its rules of combination, its articulation and progression possibilities, and assessment regime. Its registration will be followed up by curriculum and syllabus development.

Ultimately, the drive is to ensure that Umalusi's interventions assist the sector to take co-responsibility for the setting and maintenance of standards in curricula, provision and delivery, and assessment. For this reason, Umalusi has also initiated research into the comparability of qualifications on the Framework, (for example the NSC and the NCV), and qualifications from the SETA environment and private provider environment. The purpose is twofold: (1) to understand the nature of—and the possibilities of articulation between—the qualifications on sub-framework, and subsequently, between qualifications on the GENFET sub- framework and the proposed QCTO framework, as this understanding is important for credit transfer; (2) to pull together the host of private provider qualifications registered on the NQF for which no quality assurance body has been assigned, into a single set of commonly-used variants for the sector.

However, while Umalusi will continue to invite participation from public FET colleges, our 'distanced' authority over public colleges may result in these institutions being left behind, with Umalusi only being able to rely on private Adult and FET institutions' participation. This would seriously curtail the systematization of the sector and could inhibit coherence amongst public and private institutions.

Likewise, while consultants who have been working with the Department of Labour (DoL) in respect of the conceptualization of the QCTO have also been invited, these representatives can only *support* the notion of linked qualifications and cooperation, but cannot make decisions on behalf of a statutory body which does not yet exist.

In the interim the problem of NEET youth and post-literate adults is growing and any further delays in dealing with them may have dire consequences for the country. As far as possible, both the public FET sector and the emerging QCTO will need to be drawn in

to working together with Umalusi and the private FET providers participate. At the very least, public FET colleges should become subject to Umalusi's direct quality assurance measures.

7. Recommendations

Post-school and post-compulsory education seems to have become the unfortunate victim of the past years' reconfiguration of the education and training system. The space for post-school education in particular has been eroded by the commitment to create a single, meaningful HE system for South Africa, which has resulted in an institutional drift away from further education into HE, so that post-secondary institutions for individuals not going to university have, in the process of unifying the HE sector, become more and more university-like. Likewise, adult education in South Africa has come to mean almost primarily ABET. This trend has effaced the needs of post-literate and 'second chance' working adults.

Further, the education and training landscape under the now repealed SAQA Act (Act No. 58 of 1995) served to disaggregate a system which, prior to the implementation of the NQF, had greater coherence in respect of post-literacy, post-compulsory schooling, and post-school education. Not only were institutions forced to split along the lines of quality assurance bodies, but the funding and resourcing of the sector were also similarly divided. The promulgation of the new NQF Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) seems to provide much greater promise for collaboration and cooperation in terms of quality assurance and provision, (e.g., Umalusi and the QCTO for linked qualifications, and Umalusi and the HEQC in the zone of mutual trust for level 5 qualifications), as well as funding from the National Skills Fund. Umalusi therefore makes the following recommendations:

7.1 Recommendations in respect of quality assurance

Umalusi's quality assurance oversight must be strengthened and expanded in keeping with its standard setting approach (quality assurance of qualifications, curricula, provision, and assessment).

In order to "facilitate articulation across education and training systems" and enable "articulation with qualifications in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework", the draft QCTO policy documents seem to envisage shared quality assurance responsibilities in line with the purpose of a particular qualification (DoL, 2006a: 5). However, for joint quality assurance to be effective, agreements between Umalusi and the QCTO should be established in terms of the nature and extent of quality assurance requirements which will satisfy both QCs. Umalusi is of the opinion that much greater synergies between these two bodies are possible. So, for example, the quality assurance of assessment, through nationally set external assessments, has become more prominent within the QCTO (DoLb, 2006:8). It is evident that in the conceptualization of the QCTO, a shift has been made in line with Umalusi's position that at least 50% external assessments should take place and that a single system of quality assurance should emerge. Importantly, locating the learning within a national and quality-assured system will




allow for the setting and maintaining of agreed national standards, which would strengthen the possibility of the portability of credits.

However, while the draft QCTO conceptual documents will deal with quality assurance in respect of private FET and SETA providers, they do not address Umalusi's concerns about the public FET sector. Public colleges are currently already offering SETA qualifications, the NCV, and in future would presumably be keen to offer Umalusi's other proposed vocational qualifications, but without quality assurance oversight of public colleges, it would be difficult for Umalusi to ensure quality provisioning here. It is therefore very important that Umalusi's role in quality assuring public colleges be reconsidered and strengthened.

7.2 Recommendations in respect of qualifications

Umalusi is of the opinion that qualifications should reflect a continuum of learning with clear articulation between the adult, vocational, and academic qualifications on its framework. In addition, Umalusi's framework and the QCTO framework should be synergized in order to enable linked qualifications whereby Umalusi takes responsibility for theory and practice at institutions, while the QCTO takes responsibility for the workplace-based skills and learning associated with artisan status and such like. Similar linkages should be established with the Council for HE in respect of the HE Qualifications Framework in areas of overlap and where access is required.

In addition, the GENFET Qualifications Framework proposes that, at the very least, level 5 should become a zone of mutual trust (between Umalusi, the QCTO, and the HEQC). By spanning the GENFET, QCTO, and Higher Education boundaries through sharing at least one common level, Umalusi's proposal is that Further Education—in the form of AVET—will be in a position to service unmet needs in the following ways:

-  Provide programmes that extend beyond school which, while not necessarily providing access into HE, nevertheless better prepare individuals for working life than with just twelve years of schooling. This kind of vocational development is a post-school form of learning, but can readily be accommodated in FET colleges as the NATED N4 – 6 were in the past, which is where they belong.
-  Establish meaningful relationships with the QCTO in that FET can take on and deliver the non-workplace parts of learnerships or other trade and occupation-specific qualifications, providing the prerequisite theoretical and fundamental teaching, again much as the colleges did through the NATED N1 – 3 certificates in the past.
-  Become the space where adults, who do not have a matric, are able to re-enter the general academic stream of learning in order to have a 'second chance', especially since there is no longer the traditional night school culture that allowed willing adults to complete their schooling. Having re-entered education, such learners are likely to look for additional opportunities for development if their studies are successful.

- 👉 Using level 5 as a 'zone of mutual trust' would mean that FET colleges could also become places where individuals take programmes designed to strengthen indifferent school achievements, improving their marks in subjects that they have identified as necessary for acceptance into HE. Like the post-matric once did, (and as associate degrees now do in certain educational systems), these level 5 qualifications would allow for the possibility of access into HE, and even for the transfer of certain credits towards the HE qualification.
- 👉 Wheelahan (2009) identifies the need for 'boundary spanning' between schooling and HE for, in the context of this paper, NEET learners, whose schooling and home environment may not provide the necessary scaffolding to make HE a conducive learning ground. Retention figures from HE institutions bear testimony to this phenomenon. Providing this kind of service, Lolwana argues (2009), would also enhance the status of the FET sector, as it would then be seen, at least in part, as providing the necessary skills to effect the transition to HE.
- 👉 Umalusi contends that the benefits of creating a shared area between GET and FET, and HE are critical to the growth and development of further education itself. Furthermore, qualifications at level 5 provide crucial post-school learning opportunities for the mass of ordinary citizens who are not HE candidates.
- 👉 Finally, an expanded FET sector may provide a critical means for a percentage of adult learners to climb the framework upwards into HE.

7.3 Recommendations in respect of institutions

FET institutions should become institutions of choice, not a second-best option.

Currently, FET institutions do not have a strong identity and location in the South African education and training system. This is partly because the old public technical colleges are still struggling to change from second-choice institutions to institutions that offer viable, quality alternatives for a range of learners, including the so-called NEET youth, and partly because of the perceived disparities between public and private provision. Further, because these institutions are not seen to be part of one system, the development of a vibrant post-literacy, post-compulsory schooling, and post-school education system is constrained. Umalusi therefore believes that:

- 👉 FET colleges must become institutions of choice for the out-of-school youth, which includes individuals with poor passes in matric, individuals who have exited the schooling system before reaching Grade 12, as well as post-literate and working adults.
- 👉 The range of offerings should be drastically expanded at all levels, in keeping with the realities of the communities the FET colleges intend to serve. In addition, the length and types of programmes serving the needs of older young people and working adults must be reconsidered. Offerings cannot be limited to the newly introduced NCV, particularly as: (1) the out-of-school youth and working

adults are unlikely to be able to access a three-year qualification; and (2) there is no parallel HE qualification accessible to those people who are not 'university material'.

- 👉 The system urgently needs an enabling regulatory framework whereby FET institutions and local HE institutions could partner, both in terms of possible articulation and progression routes to other HE qualifications and importantly, in terms of vocational teacher training. Training of vocational teachers must take cognizance of the need of such teachers to be subject matter experts, as well as pedagogues in respect of appropriate teaching in a vocational education setting.

7.4 Recommendations in respect of systematizing the Adult Vocational Education and Training sector

The highly disparate public and private AVET sector urgently needs to be reconceptualized as one single, coherent sector. Such coherence should also be reflected in the funding mechanisms introduced by the State.

- 👉 Private provisioning should be given its due and should incrementally, both in terms of defining an identity and funding, become part and parcel of one post-literacy, post-compulsory schooling, and post-school system.
- 👉 Both public and private institutions should be subject to the same quality assurance measures (bar the need for private institutions to register with the DoE).
- 👉 While Umalusi has already initiated work around an AVET Forum and has appointed a Steering Committee, the status of both the Forum and its Committee should be formalized in order to focus on both the broader needs of the sector, as well as on a number of prioritized pilot projects which includes the public and private system.
- 👉 Public/private partnerships should be encouraged. Private providers are often in rural areas where there are no PALCs or FET colleges. Systematizing the whole sector (public and private) will create a network of colleges in keeping with the principle that no learner will be turned away.
- 👉 System-wide research in the area of vocational education and training, both at the level of the QCs and at institutions should be encouraged and supported.

7.5 Recommendation in respect of assessment

Umalusi is of the opinion that externally set and administered examinations and/or assessments are still the most reliable and cost-effective form of large scale assessment.

While many scholars recognize that large-scale national assessment and examinations are perhaps a necessary evil, this form of assessment is still the

most reliable and cost-effective approach to the assessment of learning. The experience of completely decentralized assessment approaches (for example, for unit-standard based qualifications offered in workplaces) has shown that where massification of assessment is required, decentralized assessment is not appropriate. Taking into consideration the target group – the subject of this paper – it is clear that a massified system is required, not only in the delivery of programmes, but also in assessment. Umalusi is therefore of the opinion that:

- 👉 At least 50% of the assessment for the proposed vocational qualifications should be externally set and administered.
- 👉 Internal and practical assessment should form a major part of the qualification in keeping with the vocational nature of the programmes, but should nevertheless be externally set and quality assured.
- 👉 More flexible assessment systems, including progressively establishing the notion of assessment-on-demand through banks of pre-standardized assessment items, should become the modus operandi for all the qualifications Umalusi is responsible for.
- 👉 The assessment system should make use of innovative approaches to assessment, such as the establishment of a convener system in order to mine the expertise in the sector and to set common, national standards, not only in assessment, but also in provision.

7.6 Recommendations in respect of funding

The funding of the sector needs serious reconsideration in order to make optimum use of resources, including those of the National Skills Fund.

The educational funding mechanisms currently in place are highly technical and detailed and have therefore not been discussed in great depth, never-the-less, Umalusi is of the opinion that the funding and resources for the sector could be put to much better use:

- 👉 To improve competition (and consequently the quality) between public and public, and public and private institutions, the learner (in the form of bursary schemes) and not the institution should be funded. This will enable Umalusi and the National DoE to have a more effective hold on AVET institutions in respect of their quality of teaching, learning, and assessment.
- 👉 Public and private partnerships should be encouraged to make optimum use of the massive recapitalization of public FET colleges and of human resource expertise in the private sector.
- 👉 The funding model envisaged for Umalusi in respect of this sector should include a quality assurance levy, rather than reliance on certification fees.
- 👉 The National Skills Fund should be utilized for national priorities in respect of the needs of NEET youth, post-literate adults, and post-school education.

8. References

Akojee, S. (2005). Private Further Education and Training in South Africa – The changing landscape. (In Umalusi, 2007)

Department of Education (2008). Learner retention in the South African Learning System, Pretoria

Department of Labour (DoL) (2006a). Occupational Qualifications Framework. Department of Labour draft policy. Conceptual draft – Version 1 – 2006-07-26.

DoL (2006b). Ways of seeing the QCTO: The National Careerpath Framework. Draft – Version 3 – 26 June 2007.

Lolwana, P. (2009). What size and hue is your vocational education programme? (Draft report).

Umalusi (2009a). Framework for Accreditation of Education Institutions and Assessment Bodies in General and Further Education and Training (Draft – submitted for regulation)

Umalusi (2009b). The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework (Draft – Version 7)

Wheelahan, L. (2009). Post-secondary education and social justice in Garrod N and Macfarlane B Garrod N and Macfarlane B

Notes:
