The ideal of an integrated national qualifications framework

Thesis

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SUMMARY

This study deals with the extent to which the South African education and training system reflects in principle, perception and practice, the ideal of an integrated national qualifications framework. It examines the uses and meaning of ‘integration’ through a number of lenses. These lenses include policy symbolism and a guiding philosophy for the emerging system; pragmatic and technical considerations; communities of practice; the complementarity of education and training; and curricular integration. In relation to the first two lenses, it is evident that an integrated framework is a powerful symbol of the break from a past system characterised by inequality, unfairness and deliberate mediocrity, to the extent that ‘integration’ has become the underpinning guiding philosophy for a new education and training system. However, such socio-political aspirations tend to place unreasonable demands on the system. The second set of lenses indicate that the ‘comprehensiveness’ of the system could work against the notion of integration, and in South Africa, has led to acute paralysis of the system. The strongest evidence of integration emerges from the last set of lenses namely, the grounded, meaningful practice through principled partnerships, as reflected in the development of sub-frameworks and communities of practice and the necessary collaboration needed for curricular integration and education and training delivery. Thus, it seems, to make integration meaningful, the persuasive logic of innovative, grounded practice, could be enabled and facilitated by less, not more, regulation and could be enhanced by structures that reflect the grounded practice.

KEY WORDS

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)  Policy symbolism
Guiding philosophy                  Parity of esteem
Scope                                Architecture
Policy breadth                                      Communities of practice and trust
Continuum of learning                   Curricular integrability
# ACRONYMS

**A**  
ABET  Adult Basic Education and Training  
ANC  African National Congress  
ASDSFSA  Association of Skills Development Facilitators of South Africa

**C**  
CAT  Credit Accumulation and Transfer  
CHE  Council on Higher Education  
COSATU  Congress of South African Trade Unions  
CTP  Committee of Technikon Principals (now part of Higher Education South Africa – HESA)  
CUMSA  Curriculum Model for South Africa

**D**  
DoE  Department of Education  
DoL  Department of Labour

**E**  
ECSA  Engineering Council of South Africa  
EQF  European Qualifications Framework  
ERS  Education Renewal Strategy  
ETQA  Education and Training Quality Assurance Body  
EU  European Union

**F**  
FASSET  Financial and Accounting Services Sector Education and Training Authority  
FET  Further Education and Training
G
GET General Education and Training

H
HDI Historically Disadvantaged Institution
HEQC Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education
HET Higher Education and Training
HPCSA Health Professions Council of South Africa
HRD Human Resource Development Strategy
HSRC Human Sciences Research Council
HWSETA Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority

I
ILO International Labour Organisation
IMWG Inter-Ministerial Working Group
INSETA Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority

N
NAPTOSA National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa
NQF National Qualifications Framework
NSA National Skills Authority
NSDS National Skills Development Strategy

O
OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

R
RAU Rand Afrikaans University (now University of Johannesburg)
RPL Recognition of Prior Learning

S
SACP South African Communist Party
SADC  Southern African Development Community
SADTU  South African Democratic Teachers’ Union
SANQF  South African National Qualifications Framework
SAQA  South African Qualifications Authority
SAUVCA  South African Vice-Chancellors’ Association (now Higher Education South Africa - HESA)
SCQF  Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SETA  Sector Education and Training Authority
SGB  Standards Generation Body

V
VET  Vocational Education and Training

W
WITS  University of the Witwatersrand

U
UCT  University of Cape Town
UMALUSI  Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training
UNESCO  United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation