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Principles and general objectives of education

All policies, laws and programmes introduced by the Ministry of Education since 1994 have aimed at transforming the national system of education and training. Currently, the vision statement of the Department of Basic Education declares that: 'Our vision is of a South Africa in which all our people will have access to lifelong learning, as well as education and training, which will in turn contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa.' (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

Education rights are provided in section 29 of the Constitution (1996) as follows: i) everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education which the State, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible; ii) everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable; and iii) everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that: do not discriminate on the basis of race; are registered with the state; and maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.

The National Education Policy Act of 1996 stipulates that such a policy should be directed towards:

- The advancement and protection of the fundamental rights of every person guaranteed in terms of Chapter 3 of the Constitution, and in terms of international conventions ratified by Parliament, and in particular the right: i) of every person to be protected against unfair discrimination within or by an education department or education institution on any ground whatsoever; ii) of every person to basic education and equal access to education institutions; iii) of a parent or guardian in respect of the education of his or her child or ward; iv) of every child in respect of his or her education; v) of every student to be instructed in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable; vi) of every person to the freedoms of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression and association within education institutions; vii) of every person to establish, where practicable, education institutions based on a common language, culture or religion, as long as there is no discrimination on the ground of race; viii) of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution;
- Enabling the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each student, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

- Achieving equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequality in education provision, including the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of the status of women.
- Endeavouring to ensure that no person is denied the opportunity to receive an education to the maximum of his or her ability as a result of physical disability.
- Providing opportunities for and encouraging lifelong learning.
- Achieving an integrated approach to education and training within a national qualifications framework.
- Cultivating skills, disciplines and capacities necessary for reconstruction and development.
- Recognizing the aptitudes, abilities, interests, prior knowledge and experience of students.
- Encouraging independent and critical thought.
- Promoting a culture of respect for teaching and learning in education institutions.
- Promoting enquiry, research and the advancement of knowledge.
- Enhancing the quality of education and educational innovation through systematic research and development on education, monitoring and evaluating education provision and performance, and training educators and education managers.
- Ensuring broad public participation in the development of education policy and the representation of stakeholders in the governance of all aspects of the education system.
- Achieving the cost-effective use of education resources and sustainable implementation of education services.
- Achieving close co-operation between the national and provincial governments on matters relating to education, including the development of capacity in the departments of education, and the effective management of the national education system.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Constitution**—Act No. 108 of 1996, drafted in terms of Chapter 5 of the interim Constitution of 1993—requires that education be transformed and democratized in accordance with the following values: human dignity; the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; non-racism and non-sexism. The democratization of education includes the idea that all stakeholders (parents, educators, learners and members of the community) must participate in school activities.

The **South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act No. 58** of 1995 provides for the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and for the establishment of the SAQA. The NQF establishes an integrated national framework for learning achievements, aiming at enhancing access and mobility as well as quality in education and training. In accordance with the Act, the NQF consists of eight levels grouped into three broad bands: a) general education and training (NQF Level 1, including adult basic education and training Levels 1–4); b) further education and training (Levels 2–4); and c) higher education (Levels 5–8).

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act of 2008 (see below) has repealed the SAQA Act. After the publication of the higher education qualifications framework in October 2007 and with effect in 2009, higher education qualifications in the new formulation of the NQF occupy six levels, levels 5 to 10. Levels 5-7 are undergraduate and levels 8-10 are postgraduate.

The **National Education Policy Act No. 27** of 1996 was designed to inscribe in law the policy, legislative and monitoring responsibilities of the Minister of Education under the new democratic (interim) Constitution, and to formalize the relations between national and provincial education authorities in the new system. The Act spells out directive principles for policy, as well as the consultative processes the Minister must observe in determining policy or legislation. The Act establishes the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) and the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM), and determines their functions in the national and provincial policy processes and the co-ordination of the new system. The Act makes the national Department responsible for monitoring the extent to which provincial departments uphold their responsibilities under the Constitution and the law, but creates a co-operative process to identify and remedy any default.

The **South African Schools Act No. 84** of 1996 replaced Education Acts based on the principle of separate provision of education for the different ethnic groups ('apartheid') and asserts that all learners have a right to access basic and quality education without discrimination of any sort. The Act has paved the way for a single, non-racial school system. It provides for two types of schools—public and independent schools. A significant change introduced by the Act is that the previous differentiation of state-funded schools no longer exists, and now these schools are all referred to as public schools. The Act also provides for conditions of admission for learners to public schools and for the governance of all public schools. The provision in the Act for democratic school governance, via school governing bodies, is now in place in public schools countrywide. The school funding norms prioritize, redress and target poverty with regard to the allocation of funds for the public schooling system. The Act has been amended by the **Education Laws Amendment Act No. 24** of 2005, so as to authorize the declaration of schools in poverty-stricken areas as "no-fee schools" and by the **Education Laws Amendment Act No. 31** of 2007 to provide, among others, for the functions and responsibilities of school principals, and matters pertaining to the control of substance abuse and other matters related thereto.

The **Higher Education Act No. 101** of 1997 provides for the establishment of a single national coordinated higher education system. The key features of a single coordinated system are: i) a programme-based definition of higher education, i.e. all learning programmes leading to a qualification beyond grade 12, or NQF Level 4; ii) introduction of a national and institutional planning process linked to a new funding formula that would enable the higher education system to be steered to meet national development goals; iii) democratization and reform of the governing structures of higher education institutions, including the establishment of institutional forums, representing stakeholders, to advise the councils of institutions an all aspects of institutional policy and governance; iv) incorporation of colleges offering higher education programmes into the higher education system; and v) establishment of a regulatory framework for the registration of private providers of higher education programmes. The Act also provides a statutory basis for the Council on Higher

Education. The Higher Education Amendment Act No. 63 of 2002 clarifies and brings legal certainty to labour and student matters regarding the mergers of public HE institutions. It provides clarity on the authority to take the decision to merge and to give a name and physical location to a new institution. The **Higher Education Amendment Act No. 39 of 2008** was approved in order to ensure consistency with the National Qualifications Framework Act of 2008. The Higher Education Qualifications Framework was published on 5 October 2007, refining the NQF by reorganizing higher education qualifications levels.

The **Further Education and Training Act No. 98** of 1998 provides for: the establishment, governance and funding of public further education and training institutions; the registration of private further education and training institutions; and quality assurance and quality promotion. The purpose of this Act is to establish a national coordinated further education and training system which promotes co-operative governance and provides for programme-based further education and training. This Act, together with the Ministry of Labour's **Skills Development Act No. 97** of 1998 (amended in 2003 and 2008) and the National Skills Development Strategy 2005–2010 (March 2005), represent the legislative basis for a progressive re-orientation of further education and training towards the needs of the society and the economy, and a major re-conceptualization of funding sources for the sector. The **Skills Development Amendment Act No. 37** of 2008 provides among others for the establishment of skills development institutes and the establishment of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.

The **Employment of Educators Act No. 76** of 1998 provides for the employment of educators by the state, and the regulation of conditions of service, discipline, retirement and discharge of educators. This Act clarifies a number of areas of the law that have caused confusion in the past, especially with respect to the identity of the employer, and the definitions of misconduct and incapacity. The Act also provides a statutory basis for the South African Council for Educators.

The **South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act** of 2000 establishes that all teachers have to register with SACE in order to practice as qualified teachers.

The **Adult and Basic Education Training Act No. 52** of 2000 regulates adult basic education and training (ABET) and provides for: the establishment, governance and funding of public adult learning centres; the registration of private adult learning centres; and quality assurance and promotion in adult basic education and training.

The **General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act No. 58** of 2001 provides for the establishment of the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (*Umalusi*), which in 2002 replaced the South African Certification Council.

The **Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges Act No. 16** was promulgated in 2006 to provide for the regulation of further education and training, the establishment, governance, funding and employment of staff for public FET colleges, and the registration of private FET colleges. The Act also makes provision for the promotion of quality in further education and training. All registered FET colleges become autonomous bodies with their own Councils rather than being the

direct responsibility of the provincial departments of education. The educators at FET colleges who used to be employed by the provincial departments of education are now to be employed by the individual colleges.

The **Children's Amendment Act No. 41** of 2007 modifies the Act No. 38 of 2005 and provides for: partial care of children, early childhood development, the establishment of child and youth care centres, and the development of an inter-sectoral strategy aimed at securing a properly resourced, coordinated and managed national child protection system.. Early childhood development (ECD), for the purposes of this Act, means the process of emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development of children from birth to school-going age. A person or organization providing an ECD programme must register it with the provincial head of social development and comply with the prescribed national norms and standards

The **National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No. 67** of 2008 provides for: the National Qualifications Framework; the responsibilities of the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour; the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA); Quality Councils; transitional arrangements; and to repeal the SAQA Act of 1995. The main object of this Act is to provide for the further development, organization and governance of the NQF. The NQF is now viewed as a single integrated system which comprises of three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks: a) general and further education and training, contemplated in the Act No. 58 of 2001; b) higher education, contemplated in the Higher Education Act; and c) trades and occupations, contemplated in the Skills Development Act. The Ministry of Labour is responsible for the sub-framework trades and occupations, with the advice of SAQA or a Quality Council provided for in the Skills Development Act. The quality council for general and further education and training is Umalusi as provided for in the related Act, while the quality council for higher education is the Council on Higher Education.

In terms of the Schools Act of 1996, education is compulsory for children turning 7 until the age of 15 (or grade 9). Although education is not compulsory for learners beyond grade 9, no learner who wishes to continue to grade 12 is denied access to schooling. Government has also targeted the enrolment of all 5-year-olds in grade R (the reception year) by 2014.

Administration and management of the education system

The Ministry of Education was established in May 1994 to deal with education and training at the national level. It was assisted by the Department of Education. Education at all levels—excluding tertiary education—is listed as one of the functional areas of concurrent national and provincial legislative competence (Schedule 4, Part A of the Constitution). Thus, Parliament may pass a law with regard to any level of education, and provincial legislatures may pass a law with regard to any level of education, except higher education. In 2009, following the appointment of the new administration, two ministries have been established: the Ministry of Basic Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Training, each headed by a minister assisted by a director-general and, in the case of basic education, by a deputy minister. The **Department of Basic Education** has responsibility over all schools

from grade R to grade 12, as well as adult literacy programmes; the **Department of Higher Education and Training** is responsible for higher education institutions, further education and training (FET) colleges and adult learning centres, as well as coordination of the National Human Resource Development Strategy. The new Department of Higher Education and Training will cover all public and private higher education institutions, colleges and the skills development sectors, which include the sector education and training authorities, the National Skills Authority and the National Skills Fund.

According to the proposed structure (Department of Basic Education, 2010), the Department of Basic Education comprises several 'branches', including: strategic planning and reporting; teacher education, human resources management, and institutional support; planning, quality assessment and monitoring, and evaluation; social responsibility and auxiliary services. The **Curriculum Policy, Support and Monitoring Branch** includes three main chief directorates: i) curriculum implementation and monitoring (with the directorates of: school curriculum, senior and FET; school curriculum, foundation and intermediate; early childhood development; and inclusive education); ii) curriculum and quality enhancement programmes (with the directorates of: children and youth literacy; quality improvement and development support; curriculum innovation; and foundations of learning); and iii) the national curriculum institute.

In terms of the Constitution, the national Department of (Basic) Education is responsible for matters which cannot be regulated effectively by provincial legislation, as well as for matters that need to be coordinated in terms of norms and standards at the national level. Relations with the nine **provincial departments of education** are guided by the national education policy, within which the provincial departments have set their own priorities and implementation programmes.

The **Council of Education Ministers**, consisting of the Minister of Education, the Deputy Minister and the nine provincial Members of the Executive Council for Education, meets regularly to discuss matters related to the national education policy, share information and views on all aspects of education in the country, and coordinate actions on matters of mutual interest. The **Heads of Education Departments Committee** (HEDCOM) consists of the Director-General of the Department of Education, the Deputy Directors-General, and the heads of the provincial departments of education. The functions of HEDCOM include: facilitating the development of a national education system; sharing information and views on national education; coordinating administrative actions on matters of mutual interest; and advising the national Department on a range of specific matters.

The **South African Qualifications Authority** (SAQA) is a body appointed by the Ministers of Education and Labour. The members are nominated by identified national stakeholders in education and training. The functions of the Authority are essentially twofold: (a) to oversee the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), by formulating and publishing policies and criteria for the registration of bodies responsible for establishing education and training standards or qualifications and for the accreditation of bodies responsible for monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of such standards and qualifications; and (b) to oversee the implementation of the NQF by ensuring the registration, accreditation and

assignment of functions to the bodies referred to above, as well as the registration of national standards and qualifications on the framework. It must also take steps to ensure that provisions for accreditation are complied with and, where appropriate, that registered standards and qualifications are internationally comparable.

The Authority is required to perform its tasks after consultation and in co-operation with all bodies and institutions responsible for education, training and certification of standards which will be affected by the NQF. It must also comply with the various rights and powers of bodies in terms of the Constitution and Acts of Parliament. In 1998, SAQA published the National Standards Bodies (NSB) Regulations whereby provision was made for the registration of national standards bodies and standards generating bodies. These bodies will be responsible for the generation and recommendation of qualifications and standards or registration on the NQF. The Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) Regulations were also published in 1998 and provided for the accreditation of ETQA bodies. These bodies will be responsible for: accrediting providers of education and training standards and qualifications registered on the NQF; monitoring provision; evaluating assessment and facilitating moderation across providers; and registering assessors.

Certificates for the vocational programmes offered by technical colleges and other training institutions were awarded by the South African Certifications Council (SAFCERT), established according to Act No. 85 of 1986 in order to ensure that all certificates awarded by the Council represent the same standard of education and examination. The functions of SAFCERT have been incorporated into those of the new **Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (*Umalusi*)**, which was constituted in June 2002 on the basis of the General and Further Education Act of 2001. The Council ensures that education and training providers have the capacity to deliver, and also assesses qualifications and learning programmes to ensure that they conform to set standards. The **Certification Council for *Technikon* Education** (SERTEC) was established to ensure that comparable standards of teaching and examination are adhered to by all *technikons*. The SERTEC awards certificates to successful candidates at *technikons* that comply with the examination requirements, norms and standards. Another sectoral quality council responsible for the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework, jointly with *Umalusi* and the Council on Higher Education, is the **Quality Council for Trades and Occupations** (QCTO), established under the Minister of Labour. QCTO is responsible for education and training in and for the workplace.

The **National Skills Authority**, established under the Skills Development Act 1998, advises the Minister of Labour on the national skills development policy and strategy, and liaises with **Sector Education and Training Authorities** (SETAs) on the national skills development policy and with the QCTO on the suitability and adequacy of occupational standards and qualifications and on the quality of learning in and for the workplace.

The **Council on Higher Education** (CHE) was appointed in June 1998. The CHE is an independent statutory body, responsible for advising the Minister of Education on all aspects relating to the transformation and development of higher education in South Africa. The CHE is also responsible for accreditation, quality

assurance and quality promotion through a permanent subcommittee—the **Higher Education Quality Committee** (HEQC).

Higher Education South Africa (HESA) was formed in May 2005, as the successor to the two statutory representative organizations for universities and *technikons* (now universities of technology): the South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association (SAUVCA) and the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP). The launch of HESA was in part driven by the restructuring of the higher education sector, which resulted in the establishment of new types of institutions, but also by the need for a strong, unified body of leadership. HESA represents all 23 public universities and universities of technology in South Africa. SAUVCA was established as a statutory body for the public universities in South Africa by the Universities Act No. 61 of 1955. As a statutory body, it made recommendations to the Minister and Director-General of Education on matters referred to it or alternatively on any other issues, which it deemed important for universities. The CTP was a national higher education association established in 1967 in terms of the Advanced Technical Education Act No. 40 of 1967. It comprised the rectors, principals and Vice-Chancellors of technikons in South Africa.

The **Department of Social Development** is one of the government departments that have to ensure that young children are taken care of in the best way, in particular within the framework of ECD services and programmes. Other government departments that work with the Department of Social Development include Education, Finance, Health, Provincial and Local Government, and Transport.

The **South African Council for Educators** (SACE) has been established to act as the guardian of the professionalism of teachers. All teachers have to register with SACE in order to practice as qualified teachers. The SACE has laid down certain criteria which have to be met before a teacher can be registered and it has a code of conduct with which teachers have to comply.

According to the South African Schools Act (1996), the **governing body** of a public school must: promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school; adopt a constitution and develop the mission statement of the school; adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school; support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions; determine times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school; administer and control the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school; encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school; and recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of educators and non-teaching staff.

The membership of the governing body of an ordinary public school comprises the principal, co-opted members and elected members. Elected members shall comprise a member or members of each of the following categories: i) parents of learners at the school; ii) educators at the school; iii) members of staff at the school who are not educators; and iv) learners in the eighth grade or higher, elected by the representative council of learners at the school.

According to the Further Education and Training Act (1998), every public further education and training institution must establish a council, an academic board, a student representative council and such other structures as may be determined by the council subject to the approval of the Member of the Executive Council. With the promulgation of the Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges Act of 2006 all registered FET colleges became autonomous bodies with their own Councils rather than being the direct responsibility of the provincial departments of education. The educators at FET colleges who used to be employed by the provincial departments of education are now to be employed by the individual colleges.

Structure and organization of the education system

South Africa: structure of the National Qualifications Framework (2008)

BAND	SCHOOL GRADES	NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATIONS
HIGHER		8	Doctor's degree
HIGHER		7	Master's degree
HIGHER		7	Honours degree
HIGHER		7	Postgraduate diploma
HIGHER		6	General first degree
HIGHER		6	Professional first degree postgraduate
HIGHER		6	Bachelor's degree
HIGHER		5	First diploma
HIGHER		5	Higher certificate
HIGHER		5	Certificate
FURTHER	12	4	Diplomas
FURTHER	11	3	Certificates
FURTHER	10	2	
GENERAL	9	1	Grade 9 / Adult Basic Education and Training level 4
GENERAL	8		
GENERAL	7		
GENERAL	6		
GENERAL	5		
GENERAL	4		
GENERAL	3		
GENERAL	2		
GENERAL	1		
GENERAL	R		

Note: The new NQF consists of ten levels (see below).

Pre-school education

Although provincial departments of education provide early childhood development (ECD), the scale is still limited and the field of ECD is dominated by the private sector. Where departmental provision exists, it usually caters to children from the age of 3. The Department of (Basic) Education has focused most of its work on

developing policies and programmes for the reception year (grade R)—the first year of the proposed ten years of compulsory education—designed for the 5-year-olds. Government plans to enrol all 5-year-olds in grade R by 2014.

Primary education

General education and training (GET) is compulsory and covers grades R–9. GET corresponds to Level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and is divided into three phases: foundation (grades R–3), intermediate (grades 4–6) and senior phase (grades 7–9). As a rule, children start primary education in the year when they turn 7. Primary education is divided into junior primary (grades 1–3) and senior primary (grades 4–6).

Secondary education

Lower secondary education (grades 7–9) is the last stage of compulsory education. Further education and training (FET), or senior secondary education (grades 10–12), is not compulsory and corresponds to NQF Levels 2–4. From 2008, at the end of grade 12 (the former Standard 10), students sit a public examination leading to the National Senior Certificate (NQF Level 4). Technical secondary education is offered by technical centres, high schools and vocational schools. Vocational training programmes generally last three years, leading to the National Certificate (Vocational) NCV3, which can be considered as equivalent to the National Senior Certificate if students have also passed English and Afrikaans. NCV1 and NCV2 are also awarded on completion of one or two years of vocational training respectively.

Higher education

Tertiary and higher education correspond to Levels 5–10 of the 2009 NQF (previously Levels 5–8) and include all learning programmes leading to the award of a qualification more advanced than the National Senior Certificate. Higher education institutions include colleges, *technikons*, universities of technology, and universities. Most colleges of education offer a three-year programme leading to the diploma in education (four years of study in the case of higher diplomas). Nursing colleges and hospital schools of nursing offer four-year programmes leading to a diploma. Agricultural colleges offer one-year certificate, two-year higher certificate and three-year diploma courses. Universities of technology and *technikons* offer a variety programmes in the technical and professional fields, leading to a national certificate (one-year programme), a national higher certificate (two-year programme), a national diploma (three years of study) or a national higher diploma (four-year programme). They also offer bachelor's (four-year programme, normally including one year of placement in industry), master's and doctoral degree programmes in technology. Master's degree programmes (*Magister Technologiae*) usually require a minimum of one year of study, while the doctorates (*Doctor Technologiae*) require at least two years on a full-time basis. Universities normally award a bachelor's degree after three or four years of study (five years in the case of architecture and law; five and a half years in the case of veterinary medicine; six years in the case of medicine and surgery). An honours degree requires one additional year of study, as in the case of postgraduate diplomas. A master's degree is obtained after one or two years of study. Doctoral degree programmes take a minimum of two years to complete. According to

the new NQF, higher certificates are classified at Level 5, advanced certificates and diplomas at Level 6, advanced diplomas and bachelor's degrees (not professional) at Level 7, bachelor's honours degrees and postgraduate diplomas at Level 8, master's degrees at Level 9, and doctorates at Level 10.

In 2001, the school year consisted of forty-one weeks (196 school days) divided into four terms. The school calendar for public schools for the year 2010 consists of forty-one weeks (195 school days) divided into four terms. The school year 2011 should consist of forty-two weeks for a total of 200 school days.

The educational process

In 1998, the Department of Education, in collaboration with the provincial departments of education, began the phasing in a new outcomes-based curriculum, named *Curriculum 2005*. In line with the emerging requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), *Curriculum 2005* covering grades R to 9 (i.e. the compulsory general education and training programme) has been approved as policy by the Council of Education Ministers in September 1997.

The new framework was adopted after extensive consultation and research, and represented a radical break from the apartheid past. Apartheid education was dominated by pedagogical doctrines based on theories of racial and religious determinism. By contrast, the basis of outcomes-based education (OBE) is that learning as essentially an interactive process between and among educators and learners, with the learner at the centre of the process, and the teacher serving as facilitator. It places strong emphasis on co-operative learning, especially group work on common tasks. The goal is active, lifelong learners, with a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning.

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was initially developed for the foundation phase (grades R to 3) and the senior phase (grades 7-9) of general education and training. A revised NCS for grades R-9 was completed in 2002, for implementation in January 2004. The last stage of implementation began with the introduction of the NCS for grades 10 to 12 in 2006, a process which was completed in 2008. The National Curriculum Statement–Grades R-12 embodies the vision for general education to move away from a racist, apartheid, rote model of learning and teaching, to a liberating, nation-building and learner-centred outcomes-based initiative. In line with training strategies, the reformulation was intended to allow greater mobility between different levels and between institutional sites, as well as to promote the integration of knowledge and skills via learning pathways. Its assessment, qualifications, competency and skills-based framework encourages the development of curriculum models that are aligned to the NQF, both in theory and practice.

According to the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (2009), a nation's national curriculum is at the heart of its education system. It is a primary source of support and direction for learning and teaching in the education system, and plays the role of equalizer in terms of educational standards. There is therefore an imperative on educational authorities to develop curriculum policy that is of a high quality and that communicates the

curriculum message widely and with clarity. A national curriculum should serve two overarching aims. On the one hand, it needs to satisfy the general aim of nation building and setting out the philosophy underpinning the education system. This aim should be based on national priorities and should encompass principles such as the critical and developmental outcomes in the NCS. On the other hand, it also needs to address the specific aim of selecting socially valued knowledge (and its scope, sequence, depth, emphasis, skills and content) as well as overarching pedagogical principles, to provide clarity for teachers and other education stakeholders around the knowledge and teaching expectations of the curriculum. Ultimately, the target and beneficiary of any national curriculum is the pupil, learner or student, and any curriculum policy should start with its primary beneficiary in mind. The official curriculum is a statement of what a society considers the purposes of education to be and as such, it is an important site in any democracy and will also be the subject of much debate and contestation.

In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, the notion of a national curriculum was a new concept that coincided with the birth of a new democracy. The new national curriculum had therefore to play a multitude of roles, responding to the new nation's needs. It had to: promote the new constitution; rebuild a divided nation; establish and promote a sense of national identity in general but particularly for a troubled education sector; be inclusive in the broad and narrow sense of the term; offer equal educational opportunity for all; inspire a constituency that had been oppressed by the very nature of the previous education dispensations and policies; and establish the socially valued knowledge to be transmitted to following generations.

The new curriculum was never researched or properly trialed, and there was inadequate preparation and consideration of whether teachers, pupils and the system in general were prepared for such a fundamental change over such a short space of time. If measured against the need for a national curriculum to cover the general and specific aims, Curriculum 2005 emphasized the general to the detriment of the specific. (Task Team, 2009).

The Curriculum Implementation Review Committee confirmed that teachers experience curriculum and administrative overload. Based on its recommendations, the Department of Basic Education announced a number of measures. In the short term, the Department decided to reduce the number of projects for learners and to do away with the need for portfolio files of learner assessments. It also discontinued the common tasks for assessment (CTAs) for grade 9 learners with effect from January 2010.

Three expert committees have been established to enable the smooth implementation of the main recommendations, particularly those related to the assessment policy statements, the reduction of learning areas in the intermediate phase (in order to provide time for teaching the basics required at this level), and learning and teaching support materials. The main committee is ensuring that the NCS is repackaged so that it is more accessible to teachers. Every subject in each grade will have a single, comprehensive and concise curriculum and assessment policy statement that will provide details on what teachers ought to teach and assess on a grade by grade and subject by subject basis. Currently the design features of the NCS learning areas comprise outcomes and assessment standards. Assessment requirements are

mapped onto the achievement of outcomes and assessment standards. The new curriculum and assessment policy statements will repackage the existing curriculum into the general aims of the South African curriculum, the specific aims of each subject, clearly delineated topics to be covered per term and the required number and type of assessments, also per term. In this way, outcomes will be absorbed into more accessible aims, and content and assessment requirements will be spelt out more clearly. Topics and assessments to be covered per term are being aligned to available time allocations per subject. The 'subject learning area by grade' guidelines will be known as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). The intention is to streamline the curriculum documents into single documents for each grade and each subject in which content and assessment are specified.

It has been agreed to call all learning areas and programmes 'subjects'. Therefore, from 2011 learning areas and programmes will be called subjects across the curriculum from grade R to 12. The Department plans to start phasing in the curriculum and assessment policy statements in the foundation phase in 2011. Additionally, it has been decided to reduce the number of learning areas in the intermediate phase from eight to six. That means that in grades 4 to 6, technology will be combined with science; arts and culture will be combined with life orientation, and economic and management sciences will be taught only from grade 7. Furthermore, from 2011 the language chosen by the learner as a language of learning and teaching shall be taught as a subject, or as a first additional language, from grade 1 and not from grade 2, as is currently the case. This means that the teaching of English will occur alongside mother tongue instruction for those learners who choose English as a language of learning and teaching. English will not replace the mother tongue or home language in the early grades.

Additionally, it has been agreed on a weighting of continuous assessment and end of year examinations as follows: i) grades R to 3: 100% continuous assessment; ii) grades 4 to 6: 75% continuous assessment, 25% end-of-year exam; iii) grades 7 to 9: 40% continuous assessment, 60% end-of-year exam; and iv) grades 10 to 12: 25% continuous assessment, 75% end-of-year exam. The symbols or rating scales used to rate learner performance in grades 10 to 12 will, from 2011, will be extended to grades R to 9, so that there is consistency across the curriculum.

The Strategic Plan 2010-2013 of the Department of Basic Education considers among key strategic objectives the streamlining and amending of the grades R to 12 curriculum in order to remove certain administrative and reporting burdens and create more time and opportunity for teaching and learning. Revised curriculum and assessment policy statements per grade and per learning area will be released and a strengthened and credible system will be introduced to monitor curriculum coverage and programme completion. (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

Pre-primary education

The *White Paper 1* (1995) acknowledges that 'the care and development of young children must be the foundation of social relations and the starting point of human resources development strategies from community to national levels. Early childhood development (ECD) is defined as: 'an umbrella term which is applied to the processes by which children from birth to 9 years of age grow and thrive, physically, mentally,

emotionally, morally and socially.' The Department of Education has focused most of its work on developing policies and implementation programmes for the reception year (grade R), the first year of the proposed ten years of compulsory education.

In 1994, the National Department of Education created an ECD Directorate responsible for developing a policy framework and planning and mobilizing resources in support of large-scale provision of ECD. The National ECD Pilot Project was launched in 1997 after the announcement of the Interim National Policy on ECD in 1996. The ECD Pilot Project reached 2,800 non-governmental ECD establishments serving approximately 70,000 of the most disadvantaged learners. About 3,000 practitioners received fully accredited professional training and orientation in the new curriculum for the reception year.

An audit of over 23,000 ECD centres and service providers was conducted in 2001, which revealed that the ECD field was dominated by the non-governmental sector. Where departmental provision exists, it usually caters for children from the age of 3 years to school-going age. It is estimated that about 90% of children under the age of 9 do not have access to ECD prior to attending school. The *White Paper 5 on ECD* (2001) establishes a national system of provision of a reception year (grade R) for children aged 5 years. The medium-term goal is for all children entering grade 1 to have participated in an accredited grade R programme by 2010. The *White Paper 5* also focuses on expanding ECD provision, correcting imbalances, ensuring equitable access, and improving the quality and delivery of ECD programmes. These interventions aim to break the cycle of poverty by increasing access to ECD programmes, particularly among poor children. The programmes are implemented with other departments, in particular the Department of Social Development which has a responsibility to ensure that conditions are created for the optimum development of all children and their families through the provision and support of appropriate services. ECD centres must be registered with municipalities and their activities are controlled by the provincial education departments. Regulations are applicable to public as well as private pre-primary schools.

The Department of Local Government and local authorities such as local municipalities have a clear constitutional and legislative mandate towards service provision of ECD services, especially as far as these facilities are concerned. The Regulations to the Child Care Act 1983 require the local municipality to be involved in the early childhood facilities and that it should give its approval of the establishment or continuation of an early childhood facility, as a condition of registration of such a facility. Many local municipalities also have bylaws that regulate and monitor day-care facilities and child minding (up to six children taken care of by a private person in an informal early childhood programme). The Child Care Act 1983 makes provisions for places of care which include: ECD centres/crèches, playgroups, after-school centres or a combination of the three. ECD centres must be registered with the provincial Department of Social Development.

The *White Paper 5 on ECD* which establishes a national system of provision of grade R for children aged 5 was launched in May 2001. The medium-term goal was for all children entering grade 1 to have participated in an accredited grade R programme by 2010 (the current national target is universalizing grade R by 2014). The White Paper also focuses on expanding ECD provision, correcting imbalances,

ensuring equitable access, and improving the quality and delivery of ECD programmes. These interventions aim to break the cycle of poverty by increasing access to ECD programmes, particularly among poor children.

The Department of Education sets goals for the grade R, takes care of the accreditation ECD providers, and participates in inter-sectoral programmes for pre-grade R provision (0-4 year-olds). It launched the programme for incorporating grade R into the formal schooling system in 2001. The admission age for grade R was lowered by the Ministry to children aged four turning five before 30 June of each year, which subsequently also lowered the age of entry into compulsory education at grade 1.

The SACE Act 2000 provides for the registration of ECD practitioners. In terms of the Act, all educators must be registered before they can be responsible for the care and education of children. When ECD practitioners are registered, they undergo professional development sponsored by the Council and are subject to the Code of Ethics. All practitioners must be trained and must receive ongoing training in ECD and the management of programmes and facilities for young children. Training of caregivers should include training on HIV and AIDS. The minimum qualification of practitioners is the registered Basic Certificate in ECD, National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 1 of the South African Qualifications Authority. This qualification entails basic knowledge and skills about child development from birth to 6 years of age. The practitioner must at this level demonstrate how to facilitate growth and skills development in early childhood development programmes. ECD centre supervisors should have a minimum qualification of the National Certificate in ECD at NQF Level 4. Supervisors should demonstrate a theoretical and practical knowledge and experience in managing ECD centres. They should have management skills that enable them to tackle the various daily responsibilities at a centre, as well as communicate, liaise and meet the needs of all stakeholders at an ECD centre.

In May 2006, the Department of Social Development in collaboration with UNICEF published the *Guidelines for ECD services*, a product of a long and intensive consultation process. The document focuses on ECD services aimed at interventions and programmes for parents and/or primary caregivers as well as community-based services and ECD centres. These Guidelines were developed to facilitate the Department of Social Development's mandate towards ECD in South Africa. They also refer to important core aspects in the early childhood phase of life such as nutrition, health care, environmental safety and early education and learning. It remains, however, the role and mandate of other departments to provide guidance and information on their contributions and mandates towards young children through policies, guidelines and other methods of communication.

During 2009 the Department of Social Development finalized the development of regulations under the Children's Act of 2005 (amended in 2007), including national norms and standards. The Children's Act places an obligation on the state to provide partial care (crèche) and ECD programmes, among other care and protection services. An inter-sectoral national policy framework, implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation framework have been developed to support the implementation of the Act. The National Integrated Plan for ECD includes the development of national Early

Learning Standards, the training of ECD practitioners, and the development of national norms and standards for grade R funding.

In January 2010, the ECD Directorate, Department of Basic Education, has made available the *Foundations for learning assessment framework–Grade R*. The document has a two-fold purpose. It organizes the assessment standards contained in the National Curriculum Statement into manageable 'sections'. It also provides suggested progression so that over the course of four terms learners progressively build on what has come before and also prepares them for future learning. The document refers to 'milestones' for literacy, which are simply the National Curriculum Assessment Standards reorganized into more manageable 'bits' and spread out over the four terms of the school year. The milestones describe the knowledge and skills that grade R learners should be developing each term. Skills and concepts that underpin each milestone should be addressed on an ongoing basis in a sequential and building manner. The principles that underpin planning towards assessment apply to numeracy too.

According to Department of Social Development statistics, in March 2009 a total of 646,491 children were enrolled in 13,736 registered ECD centres. The proportion of infants and young children attending such facilities is still very low (an estimated 16.5% of children aged 0-4 at the national level in 2007 compared to 7.5% in 2002) and varies considerably across provinces.

The expansion of the grade R to 5-year-olds in publicly funded ECD programmes has increased participation from 273,499 in 2000 to 386,539 children in 2004. To improve the quality of the ECD programmes in the country, materials have been developed and distributed and 4,500 practitioners have been trained nationwide. According to the Department of Basic Education statistics, in 2009 the total enrolment was 620,223 children representing a gross enrolment ratio of 50%. It is estimated that 63.3% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in school-based as well as non-school education programmes in 2008.

Primary and lower secondary education

Formal education in South Africa can be categorized into sectors and levels. The sectors, which are closely linked to particular levels, are public ordinary school education, independent school education, special school education, technical college education, teacher training, and *technikon*/university of technology and university training. A public school may be an ordinary public school or a public school for learners with special education needs. The levels are pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education.

As mentioned, general education and training (GET) is compulsory and covers grades R–9. GET corresponds to Level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and is divided into three phases: foundation (grades R–3), intermediate (grades 4–6) and senior (grades 7–9). As a rule, children start primary education in the year when they turn 7. Primary education is divided into junior primary (grades 1–3) and senior primary (grades 4–6).

From 1 January 2000, a new school admission policy is being implemented, which will prevent under-age and over-age pupils from attending public schools. It is estimated that some 35% of pupils are either under-age or over-age. In 2007, the government adopted a policy of "no fee" schools. The aim of this policy is progressively to give effect to the constitutional imperative of the right to a basic education. It is a policy and budgetary response to the need to make education truly accessible by removing fees as a barrier. The South African Schools Act has been amended accordingly and schools in the lowest two quintiles have been declared "no fee" schools. In compensation, government subsidizes the schools' loss of fee income. In 2009, 55.2% of public schools (some 14,000 schools) covering 41.8% of learners (around 5.3 million) were classified as no-fee schools.

Basic activities during the junior primary phase involve learning to read, write and calculate, and the development of language proficiency. A start is made to learn one additional language. During the senior primary phase, learning activities concentrate on reading and oral proficiency in the mother tongue and second language, mathematics, history, geography, general science, and practical skills such as needlework, woodwork or art.

The Department of Education's language policy stipulates that pupils have a right to be taught in a language of their choice, and states that they must inform the school which language they wish to be taught in when applying for admission. Schools, in turn, are expected to take their requests into account. According to the policy: a) only the eleven official languages may be used for instruction (Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga); b) from grade 3 onwards, all pupils will have to study the language they are taught in, and at least one other approved language; c) language may not be used as a barrier to admission; d) governing bodies must stipulate how their schools will promote multilinguism; e) failing a language will result in failing a grade.

The *Curriculum 2005: Lifelong learning for the Twenty-first century* (1997, revised in 2002) provides the policy framework for early childhood development, GET, further education and training (FET, grades 10-12) and adult basic education and training (ABET). The eight compulsory learning areas that form the basis of all education up to the National Senior Certificate are: languages; mathematics; natural sciences; social sciences; arts and culture; life orientation; economic and management sciences; and technology.

Each learning programme has specific outcomes and each specific outcome has three to four assessment criteria. The assessment criteria include range statements and performance indicators. Critical outcomes are broad, generic cross-curricular outcomes which are intended to ensure that learners gain the skills, knowledge and values that will allow them to contribute to their own success as well as to the success of their family, community and the nation as a whole. Specific outcomes refer to the specification of what learners are able to do at the end of a learning experience, and include skills, knowledge and values, which inform the demonstration of the achievement of an outcome or set of outcomes. The specific outcomes are not grade specific.

Each specific outcome has three to four assessment criteria against which a learner is assessed to have achieved the specific outcome. The criteria indicate, in broad terms, the observable processes and products of learning which serve as culminating demonstrations of the learner's achievements. Assessment criteria are explained and detailed in the performance indicators. Each assessment criterion is described in terms of range statements which indicate the scope, level, depth and parameters of the achievement. They include indications of the critical areas of content, processes and parameters of achievement the learner should engage with to reach an acceptable level of achievement. The range statements provide guidelines but make provision for multiple learning strategies, for flexibility in the choice of specific content and process and for a variety of assessment methods. They therefore do not restrict learning to specific lists of knowledge items. Each assessment criterion also has performance indicators which provide details of the content and processes that learners should master as well as details of the learning contexts in which the learner will be engaged. They allow statements of the quality of achievement, that is, whether the achievement is at the level required or whether the learner has surpassed this level.

Finally, expected levels of performance are written for each learning programme by grade. They are expected to inform parents, educators and learners in transparent and rigorous ways what is considered quality work and what to aim for and whether their performance or products measure up to valid and credible standards nationally.

The literacy learning programme for grades R-3 has as its main focus language acquisition and language development, and various kinds of communication for both the home language and a first additional language. It enables learners to think creatively, critically and reflectively, and to access, process and communicate information while building the foundations for a range of additional literacies. In this way, it supports and promotes competency in life skills and numeracy.

The life skills learning programme involves many social, environmental and cultural issues, and topics that will require sensitive mediation. The topics and issues in Life Skills are personal and require learners to express their feelings, fears and insecurities freely. It supports literacy and numeracy as it provides ample listening, reading and viewing, thinking and reasoning, speaking, writing, calculating and problem solving opportunities.

The numeracy learning programme recognizes the power of symbols and creates opportunities for all learners to develop the mathematically-related knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for their daily lives. These skills facilitate induction into society so that learners can function as effective, responsible members in order that they may participate meaningfully in society. Problem solving, reasoning and many other skills that are employed specifically in numeracy, provide support to similar skills in both the literacy and life skills learning programmes. The three programmes should be seen as related and reinforcing each other. Through these programmes, learners are holistically developed and prepared to engage with the next phase of learning, i.e. the intermediate phase.

In grades R-3, a 1 to 4 scale is used to record and report on learner's progress in the three compulsory learning areas (literacy, numeracy, and life skills) as follows:

1, not achieved; 2, partial achievement; 3 satisfactory achievement; and 4, outstanding/excellent achievement. In grades 4-6 (intermediate phase), the same scale is used with the corresponding percentages, as follows: 1, 1-34%; 2, 35-49%; 3, 50-69%; and 4, 70-100%. In the intermediate phase the recording and reporting of learner performance in formal assessment tasks should be against the eight prescribed learning areas. For the senior phase (grades 7-9), a 1 to 7 scale is used, e.g.: 1, not achieved (0-29%); 2, elementary achievement (30-39%); 3, moderate achievement (40-49%); 4, adequate achievement (50-59%); 5, substantial achievement (60-69%); 6, meritorious achievement (70-79%); 7, outstanding achievement (80-100%).

The tables below show the suggested time allocation to the different learning areas according to the revised National Curriculum Statement:

General Education and Training (Grades R–IX): guidelines for the weighting of learning programmes (1997)

Learning programme	Suggested time allocation (in %)		
	Foundation (Grades I–III)	Intermediate (Grades IV–VI)	Senior (Grades VII–IX)
Language, literacy and communication	25	35	20
Mathematical literacy, mathematics and mathematical sciences	25	15	13
Natural science and Technology	–	15	–
Natural science	–	–	12
Technology	–	–	10
Human & social science, Economic & management sciences	–	15	–
Human and social science	–	–	10
Economic and management sciences	–	–	10
Arts and culture, Life orientation	–	15	10
Arts and culture	–	–	10
Life skills	25	–	–
Flexible time	25	5	5
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: DOE, 1997.

General Education and Training: time allocation according to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2001)

Phase	Indicative time allocation		
	Breaks (weekly hours)	Contact time (weekly hours)	Non-contact time (weekly hours)
Foundation and Intermediate	5h	25h	10h
Senior (Grade VII)	5h	26h30m	8h30m
Senior (Grades VIII and IX)	5h	27h30m	7h30m

Source: DOE, 2001. 'Both contact and non-contact time will be used for the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement. This will increase time and space for both learner-teacher interaction and learner participation. There will also be increased opportunities to develop learners physically, emotionally and socio-culturally through sport, music and arts during the non-contact time.'

General Education and Training, Foundation phase (Grades I–III): suggested time allocation according to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2001)

Learning programme	Time allocation (in percentage)	Time allocation (in weekly hours)
Literacy	40	14h
Numeracy	35	12h15m
Life skills	25	8h45m
Total	**100%**	**35h**

Source: Ibid. Suggested time allocations in terms of weekly hours include both contact and non-contact time, i.e. the whole school time.

General Education and Training, Intermediate phase (Grades IV–VI): suggested time allocation according to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2001)

Learning programme	Time allocation (in percentage)	Time allocation (in weekly hours)
Languages	30	10h30m
Sciences and Technology	20	7h
Mathematics	18	6h15m
Social sciences (history and geography)	14	5h
Life skills, Economy and society	10	3h30m
Arts and culture	8	2h45m
Total	**100%**	**35h**

Source: Ibid.

General Education and Training, Senior phase (Grades VII–IX): suggested time allocation according to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2001)

Learning programme	Time allocation (in percentage)	Time allocation (in weekly hours)
Languages	25	9h
Mathematics	18	6h15m
Natural sciences	13	4h33m
Social sciences (history and geography)	12	4h12m
Technology	8	2h45m
Economic and management sciences	8	2h45m
Life orientation	8	2h45m
Arts and culture	8	2h45m
Total	**100%**	**35h**

Source: Ibid.

Note: Human rights education and environmental education are cross-curricular areas. Life skills (Life orientation) includes: health promotion; personal and social development; physical development and movement; and orientation to the world of work. Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities are seen as part of one, integrated curriculum framework. Schools must offer at least two official languages. A school may offer other languages (either official or foreign) and other learning areas, in addition to the compulsory ones. Notional Learning Time is defined as 'the learning time that it is conceived it would take an average learner to meet the learning outcomes. It includes classroom contact time and individual learning time.'

HIV and AIDS is a major problem affecting the safety, security and well-being of both learners and educators. Its impact can be partially judged in terms of the increasing number of orphans. In 2003, 17.4% of children (over 2 million children, predominantly African) had lost one parent, while 3% (371,000 children) had lost both parents. According to a 2004 study, 12.7% of teachers were HIV-positive. HIV and AIDS is addressed extensively in the formal school curriculum as part of the subject life orientation. Almost all schools provide life-skills-based HIV and AIDS education. In addition, peer education programmes are used to educate youth about HIV and AIDS prevention, care and treatment and to promote a caring attitude towards people living with AIDS. Training materials and courses have been provided for teachers, school managers and parents. (Department of Education, 2008).

In 1997, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in primary schools was 96.5% and the net enrolment ratio (NER) was 87.1%. There were large variations in enrolment ratios by province, with the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal having the highest gross enrolment ratios (111.9% and 101.7%, respectively), and the Northern Cape having the lowest (76.5%). According to the General Household Survey (GHS) 98% of 7-13 year old children had access to education in 2008. The participation rate of the 7-15 year old population was estimated at 97.9% in the same year. The gross enrolment ratio in grades 1-7 was estimated at 98% in 2008. (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

Statistics of the Department of Education show that in 2008 there were 25,875 ordinary schools in the country, comprising: 15,259 primary schools with 6,340,478 learners and 193,550 educators; 5,657 secondary schools, with 3,685,938 learners and 131,448 educators; and 4,959 combined and intermediate schools, with 2,212,947

learners and 75,955 educators. (Department of Education, *Education statistics in South Africa 2008*, March 2010).

Senior secondary education

Further education and training (FET) include learning programmes that are registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Levels 2–4 and that correspond with grades 10–12 in the school system and N1–N3 in the technical college system. Learners enter FET after completion of the compulsory phase of education at grade 9, via ABET route, or through workplace qualifications.

The provincial education authorities are responsible for funding and running FET in schools and colleges, while the national Ministry has overall policy responsibility and responsibility for norms and standards. The Department of Labour, other government departments/authorities and private providers including companies, are also important role players. Many of the institutions in the FET band offer programmes which extend downwards into GET or upwards into higher education. Almost no provider offers only FET. Providers in the FET band, then, do not fall neatly, for the purposes of governance, into a single FET category. FET is provided directly or through distance education by: public schools and colleges, independent schools and colleges, and on-the-job trainers. Various providers are involved in this band of education and training, such as: senior secondary schools; technical colleges; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); regional training centres; private providers; private colleges and training centres; private companies; industry training centres; and community colleges.

The FET system is viewed as an open learning system, responsive to the needs of individuals and communities, and contributing to the development of the country's human resources. The mission of FET is to foster intermediate to high level skills, lay the foundation for higher education, facilitate the transition from school to work, develop well-educated, autonomous citizens and provide opportunities for lifelong learning through the articulation of learning programmes.

The *Green Paper on further education and training* (1998) proposed a number of important changes to the senior secondary phase of formal schooling. The development of the NQF, the implementation of an outcomes-based approach to education and training, and the shift in learning and teaching frameworks from content-driven to programme-oriented models as outlined in *Curriculum 2005* now have been extended to the senior secondary phase.

The new qualifications structure is based on a more flexible combination of fundamental, core and elective learning credits, with the aim of linking education and training, and theory and practice. The new structure offers greater breadth—in terms of mathematical and communicative literacy—and depth, in terms of core and elective learning which links learners more closely to the needs of higher and lifelong learning, and to work and career development. Closer integration of education and training in the FET band is also promoted by encouraging institutional cooperation and joint curriculum development between senior secondary schools, FET colleges, and private and enterprise-based providers of education and training.

The South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) has identified twelve organizing fields within the NQF. These organizing fields are based on the integration of fundamental disciplines and areas of study, and on the identification of key occupational clusters. These organizing fields are recognized as the basis for the development of curricula, learning programmes, unit standards and qualifications for FET. The twelve fields are: agriculture and nature conservation; culture and arts; business, commerce and management studies; communication studies and language; education, training and development; manufacturing, engineering and technology; human and social studies; law, military science and security; health sciences and social services; physical, mathematical, computer and life sciences; services; physical planning and construction. The development of FET qualifications, learning programmes and curricula involves two processes: the development and registration of qualifications and unit standards; and the development of curriculum frameworks, learning programmes and learning materials.

Under the new outcomes-based approach a student's FET learning programme consists of a particular set of unit standards. Each unit standard states the specific outcomes to be assessed and the assessment criteria. Learning activities are designed so that students can master the required outcomes to the required assessment standard.

The National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination of 2008 was the first that was based on the new National Curriculum Statement, which requires all learners in grades 10 to 12 to take seven subjects. Two of these subjects must be South African languages, one of which must be the language of teaching and learning. In addition to two languages, all learners must offer life orientation and either mathematics or mathematical literacy. In addition to these four compulsory subjects, learners must choose three subjects from a list of approved subjects. To obtain an NSC a candidate must, depending on the minimum requirements, achieve either 40% or 30% in six subjects. In the seventh subject a candidate is allowed to achieve less than 30%.

In 2008, the overall national pass rate in the NSC examination for full-time candidates with seven or more subjects was 62.2%. In all the provinces more girls than boys wrote the NSC examination. However, in relative terms, the national pass rate of male candidates (62.9%) was higher than the national pass rate of female candidates (61.5%). A similar trend was seen in six of the nine provinces, the exceptions being Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape. In all the provinces except Limpopo, more female than male candidates passed. Furthermore, the overall pass rate, by province, varied from 78.7% in the Western Cape to 50.6% in the Eastern Cape. (Department of Education, *Education statistics in South Africa 2008*, March 2010).

The main role of FET colleges is to provide artisan and vocational training programmes to youth and adults who have completed grade 9 (Level 1 on the NQF) or higher. The colleges provide education at the post-compulsory but pre-higher education level. Their emphasis on vocational and artisan training is aligned to the key areas of economic intervention highlighted in the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa and its associated programme, the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition.

The public FET college sector was formed through a process of institutional rationalization by means of which 152 technical colleges were merged into 50 multi-campus FET colleges, a process completed in 2003. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, there has also been a growth of private FET institutions of variable quality and these are in the processes of being registered. By August 2008, 77 had been registered and a further 615 had applied for registration but were still being processed. As of 2006, there were approximately 361,386 students registered in the 50 public FET colleges. They were serviced by 7,096 educators. In addition, it is estimated that in 2006 there were over 700,000 learners enrolled in private FET institutions, although it is not clear whether this figure is for full-time equivalents or whether it included students doing short courses for a few weeks or even less.

In January 2007, the new National Certificate (Vocational) or NCV was introduced into the FET colleges and began to replace the old NATED (N) technical qualification courses which had been used for decades. The NCV has been introduced at FET colleges in stages. In 2007, it was introduced at NQF level 2 (equivalent to Grade 10 in schools), in 2008 at NQF level 3, and in 2009 at NQF level 4. The NCV is more in line with the new school curriculum. Such overlap aims to improve mobility between the school NSC and the NCV. The underlying rationale in the NCV is the development of both cognitive and practical skills as well as an integrated approach to learning. It consists of three compulsory subjects—language, mathematics or math literacy, and life skills, (with an emphasis on IT)—and four vocational subjects which depend on the programme they choose. Students undertake one-year-long programmes, and on completion are awarded a certificate at three levels, these being Levels 2, 3 and 4 on the NQF. Although it is possible for students completing their NCV to enter universities, this is often difficult due to differences in the alignment of programmes at university and FET colleges. Thus the NCV works mainly to equip students with trade and vocation skills so that they may obtain formal employment in the work environment or become self-employed. A total of 14 new vocational programmes have been designed in consultation with business and labour to ensure that the sector is responsive to the general needs of industry and the overarching goals of achieving accelerated growth. These include programmes for engineering, business, tourism and hospitality, IT and agriculture. (Department of Education, 2008; Department of Basic Education, 2010).

Learners between 14 and 18 years of age are officially regarded as being of appropriate age for the secondary grades 8-12. General Household Survey data show that participation rate of 14-18 year olds in education institutions was 89% in 2008, with a slightly lower percentage of girls than boys. The gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 85.3%. (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Since 1995 South Africa has carried out a number of national learner achievement assessments through its programme of Systemic Evaluation at grades 3 and 6, which also assesses school management capacity, the learning context of learners and the school community, and educator qualifications. Grade 3 learners were assessed in 2001 in literacy, numeracy and life skills. In 2004, grade 6 learners were assessed in language, mathematics and science. Grade 3 learners were tested in literacy and

numeracy in 2007. The instruments also assemble invaluable collateral data on learners' personal, school and family circumstances.

A number of assessment studies in recent years have shown that the educational achievement of learners is unacceptably poor. The Department of Education's systemic evaluations, conducted in grade 3 (in 2001) and grade 6 (in 2004) show very low levels of literacy and numeracy among learners. Scores for the grade 3 learners averaged 68% for listening comprehension but only 39% for reading comprehension and writing, 30% for numeracy, and 54% for life skills. The achievement rates of learners in the grade 6 evaluation were even poorer. Learners averaged 38% for language (the language of learning and teaching), 27% for mathematics and 41% for natural sciences. Four international studies confirm the poor performance of South African learners. These are the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) Project, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) study, and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). All show South African learners having exceptionally low levels of basic literacy and numeracy skills compared to learners in the other countries that participated. The PIRLS study also shows that the range on scores among South Africa's children is far greater than the average, indicating high inequalities in learner performance.

The South Africa Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) survey was conducted in August 1999 under the auspices of the Department of Education. The main objective of the survey was to obtain information on learning achievement and outcomes at the primary school level and to determine factors that impact on the quality of teaching and learning. A 2% nationally representative stratified random sample of 400 primary and combined schools was drawn, targeting grade 4 pupils, their parents, principals and educators. Competency instruments for assessing literacy, numeracy and life skills learning were administered to grade 4 learners, yielding about 11,000 completed instruments. In addition, structured questionnaires were administered to parents, principals, educators and learners to solicit information on the management of schools, calibre of educators, profile of learners and the socio-economic environment of the school community.

The majority of surveyed pupils (47.1%) obtained scores for the literacy task that range between 25% and 50%. A very small proportion of the learners demonstrated a high level of competency in the literacy task, with only 12.8% of pupils obtaining 75% or higher. About 13% of the learners achieved very low levels of performance (i.e. scoring less than 25%). On average, grade 4 pupils scored 48.1% in the literacy task. A large proportion (44%) of grade 4 pupils scored below 25% in the numeracy task, while only about 2% obtained scores in the 75-100% range. The average score obtained for the numeracy task is 30%, which is much lower than the average literacy score. More than half of grade 4 learners (54%) obtained scores that are between 25% and 50% in the life skills task, while a very small proportion (6%) obtained 75% or more, the average being 47.1%—very similar to that of the literacy task.

The 2006 PIRLS was the first PIRLS study in which South Africa participated. The assessment was carried out on grades 4 and 5 learners (although the assessment was aimed at a grade 4 level), in more than 400 schools, and in all 11 official

languages. Learners were assessed in the language of learning they had used in grades 1 to 3. The rationale for including grade 5 learners was to study the progression in reading ability from grade 4 to grade 5, given the transition of learners in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in grade 4. As with the other international achievement studies, South African learners fared poorly, achieving the lowest score of all 45 participating education systems.

TIMSS measured grade 8 learning achievement in mathematics and science in 41 countries in 1995, in 38 countries in 1999, and in 50 countries in 2003. South Africa did not participate in the 1995 study, but in both 1999 and 2003 studies South African learners fared worse than their counterparts in all other participating countries.

The Department of Education produced and administered the first cycle of the annual national assessments (ANA) in literacy and numeracy for grade 1 to 6 learners in public schools. The assessments form part of the Foundations for Learning (FFL) Campaign and are intended to monitor progress in laying solid foundations for learning at primary school level between 2008 and 2011. The set target of the FFL Campaign is to ensure that by 2011 no learner would attain an aggregate score of less than 50% in these standardized assessments. The first phase of providing feedback on the results of the ANA was confined to grades 3 and 6, and involved 663,001 learners from 7,000 schools, spread across eight of the nine provinces. Baseline findings from the 2008 assessments indicated that 60% of grade 3 learners obtained aggregate scores in the range of 0-49% in both literacy and numeracy. For grade 6, languages and mathematics, the corresponding proportion was 75%. The results of grade 3 and 6 learners, performing at an "outstanding" level (Level 4 with aggregate scores of between 70% and 100%) in both literacy and numeracy, were 15% and 10% respectively. An impact evaluation study will be conducted in 2011 to measure progress in the four years of the FFL's existence.

The results of the systemic evaluation survey of 2007, which was conducted in the foundation phase (grade 3), were released during 2008. The mean or average scores obtained by learners were 36% in literacy and 35% in numeracy. These findings corroborate the ANA results, which indicated that the majority of grade 3 learners (65%) were functioning at 0-49% (Levels 1 and 2). Both the ANA and the systemic evaluation results indicate that overall, primary school learners are functioning at unsatisfactory levels, and that the strategic initiatives of the FFL Campaign need to be strengthened. (Department of Education, 2008; Department of Basic Education, 2010).

Teaching staff

The Higher Education Act of 1997 incorporated teacher education into higher education removing colleges of education from provincial control and enabling the emergence of a single national system of qualifications for professional educators. Most colleges of education offer a three-year programme leading to the Diploma in Education—four years of study in the case of higher diplomas. The college sector trains almost all the primary teachers, and in the rural areas almost all of the primary and secondary teachers.

Universities offer a range of first degree courses that are normally followed by a one-year postgraduate teaching diploma programme. This type of programme is designed specifically to train secondary teachers. Integrated four-year teaching degree courses—such as the B Paed and B.A.(Ed)—are offered at a number of universities, usually in association with a college of education. The degree of Bachelor of Primary Education is specifically designed as an integrated teaching degree.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of Further Diploma in Education (FDE) programmes offered by colleges, universities, and *technikons*/universities of technology. FDE programmes follow a teaching qualification and are usually taught on a part-time basis or through distance education. They offer teachers the opportunity to improve their qualifications and to specialize in a particular field. The pass rate in most FDE courses is significantly higher than distance education degree programmes and concern has been expressed regarding the standard, relevance and appropriateness of some FDE courses.

Most educators in South Africa are employed by the departments of education as teachers in the schooling system. Their conditions of employment are spelt out in the Educators' Employment Act, the Labour Relations Act, and in the Personnel Administration Measures. In addition, conditions of employment are negotiated on an on-going basis in the Education Labour Relations Council.

The Department of Education determines whether or not a qualification fulfils the criteria laid down in the *Evaluation of Qualifications for Employment in Education* (1997). The Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) is based primarily on the number of recognized prescribed full-time professional or academic years of study at an approved university, *technikon* or college of education and taking into account the level of school attained. The evaluation of the REQV is a complex process because not all qualifications are recognized as relevant. An educator may have three different qualifications, but only one of these may be recognized as being relevant to employment in education. Given that the evaluation of an educator's qualifications determines his or her salary, the criteria for recognition of a qualification are of significance.

The REQVs are categorized as follows:

- REQV 10: grade 12 and no training.
- REQV 11: grades 8-11 plus two years of training.
- REQV 12: grade 12 and one or two years of training.
- REQV 13: grade 12 and three years of training.
- REQV 14: grade 12 and four years of training.
- REQV 15: grade 12 and five years of training.
- REQV 16: grade 12 and six years of training.
- REQV 17: grade 12 and seven years of training.

Educators are considered unqualified if they have a REQV 10 qualification, under-qualified if they have a REQV 11 or 12 qualification, and appropriately qualified if their qualification falls within the REQV 13–17 range.

According to the Education Labour Relations Council Resolution No. 7 of 1998, educators in primary and secondary schools are expected to work a minimum of 1,800 actual prescribed hours per year. All educators should be at school during the formal school day, which should not be less than seven hours per day, except for special reasons and with the prior permission of the principal. The seven hours per day includes breaks and the periods in which the learners are not at school.

The time allocated for teaching in respect of different post levels differs according to the size of the school. In smaller schools principals and their deputies are required to do more teaching than in large schools. The actual hours must therefore be established in relation to the curriculum needs of the school, the timetable and existing staff. In general terms, the following may be considered as guidelines in determining the scheduled teaching time: a) Primary school: Post level 1: between 85% and 92%; Post level 2: between 85% and 90%; Deputy principal: 60%; Principal: between 10% and 92%, depending on the post level (principals at post level 1 are expected to teach 100% of the scheduled teaching time); b) Secondary school: Post level 1: between 85% and 90%; Post level 2: 85%; Deputy principal: 60%; Principal : between 5% and 60%, depending on the post level.

The South African Council for Educators (SACE) has been established to act as the guardian of the professionalism of teachers. All teachers have to register with SACE in order to practise as qualified teachers. The Council has laid down certain criteria which have to be met before a teacher can be registered and it has a code of conduct with which teachers have to comply. A teacher who is found guilty of breaching the code of conduct can be cautioned and/or penalized and/or de-registered.

In 1997, about 74% of primary school educators were appropriately qualified. The percentage of unqualified and under-qualified educators was lowest in the Western Cape (10%) and Gauteng (12%) provinces, while North West (34%), KwaZulu-Natal (33%) and Free State (31%) had the highest proportion. The utilization of unqualified and under-qualified primary school educators is a common phenomenon, particularly in rural schools.

The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (Department of Education, 2006) draws on the work of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education, which was appointed in 2003 and reported to the Minister of Education during 2005. The Committee conducted a wide-ranging study and consulted extensively with key stakeholders. The policy considers teacher education in terms of two complementary sub-systems: initial professional education of teachers, and continuing professional teacher development. The overriding aim of the policy is to properly equip teachers to undertake their essential and demanding tasks, to enable them to continually enhance their professional competence and performance, and to raise the esteem in which they are held by the people of the country. (DOE, October 2006).

According to the National Policy Framework, in 2006 there were 386,595 teachers employed by the Departments of Education of whom 19,407 (or 5%) were in independent schools. Of those in public institutions, 173,850 were in primary schools, 111,865 in secondary schools, and 53,988 in combined, intermediate or middle schools. In addition, there were 15,954 Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)

educators, 7,392 teachers working in special schools and 7,363 in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. Some 24,118 teachers in public schools (or 7%) were employed by school governing bodies. In terms of qualifications (public schools), in 2005 some 53% of teachers were at REQV 14 and above, 38% at REQV 13, 6% at REQV 12, 2% at REQV 11, and 1% at REQV 10. (DOE, 2006). In 2008, the percentage of qualified educators was estimated at 94.4%. (DOE, 2008).

Since all initial teacher education is the responsibility of higher education, the qualifications structure for teacher education is subject to the Minister's policy on qualifications in terms of the Higher Education Act 1997. This policy is expressed in the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), which provides the basis for integrating all higher education qualifications into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). A four-year B.Ed degree, which includes the equivalent of one full-time year of supervised practical teaching experience in schools, is the standard qualification for students wishing to teach in any learning area, subject and phase. An Advanced Diploma is offered to graduates with an appropriate first degree who wish to teach. This will replace and be equivalent to the current Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and the Higher Diploma in Education.

Despite a huge effort and the commitment of resources by schools, Provincial Departments of Educations, Universities, NGOs, community-based organizations, teachers' unions and faith-based organizations that have been applied to in-service education, current provision remains fragmented and un-coordinated and therefore makes a rather limited impact. The report of the 2003 TIMMS Study showed that South African teachers have extensive development opportunities, but the evidence of poor learner performance shows that these have limited impact.

Continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) is seen as vital in developing, maintaining, encouraging and ensuring the highest professional ethos in the teaching profession, as well in improving the quality of education in schools. A national system of CPTD that will design, implement and manage the system under the leadership of the South African Council for Educators (SACE) is being developed jointly by the Department of Education and SACE. This system promises to be one of the significant developments in ensuring continuing professional development for teachers. Of significance also is its attempt to discourage a 'paper chase' by encouraging professional development activities that directly impact on teacher competence, commitment, content knowledge and understanding, as well as professionalism.

In April 2008, an agreement called *A Framework for the Establishment of an Occupation Specific Dispensation for Educators in Public Education* was signed by the Department and the teacher unions. The agreement develops a career path for teachers seeking to retain teachers in the classroom. This is a radical departure from a system in which career progression meant promotion to a management post within a school. The new career paths allow a teacher to progress and develop, but without going into management posts. The framework also deals with improvements in teacher salary structure. This, too, will inevitably have implications for CPTD. (DOE, 2008).

In 2008, there were 400,953 educators in the ordinary public and independent school sector, of whom 22,893 (5.7%) were employed in the independent school sector; the national average learner-educator ratio was 30.5:1. In the same year, the total number of permanent staff devoted to instruction and research in public higher education institutions totaled 15,936. (DOE, 2010).

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Department of Social Development: http://www.dsd.gov.za/ [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

Higher Education South Africa: http://www.hesa.org.za/ [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

National Education Portal: http://www.thutong.doe.gov.za/ [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

National Qualifications Framework: http://www.nqf.org.za/ [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

South African Council for Educators: http://www.sace.org.za/ [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

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For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm

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