



**MINISTRY  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Address by the Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr Blade Nzimande at the launch  
of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations**

**23 February 2010**

Programme Director  
Honourable Ambassador for Germany  
Chairpersons and Chief Executive Officers of SAQA, Council on Higher Education and  
Umalusi  
Nominated members of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)  
Chairperson and members of the National Skills Authority,  
Chairpersons and Chief Executive Officers of the Sector Education and Training Authorities  
(SETAs)  
Sam Morotoba, Deputy Director-General Employment and Skills Development Services in  
the Department of Labour

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman

This is a landmark moment which brings us together to launch the QCTO and appoint the members of the Board today.

In light of the skills development challenges we face as a country, the launch of the QCTO represents an important milestone and achievement. It commemorates a decade of hard work with regard to skills development and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa.

In 1995, the SAQA Act heralded a new and empowering NQF. In 2001, a study team was appointed to assess and review its implementation. At this stage, the general perception amongst implementers and beneficiaries (learners, providers and industry alike) was that the NQF had become bureaucratic, rigid and characterized by a plethora of bodies responsible for standards generation and quality assurance. The reality was that the important relationships and integrated yet different approaches required were difficult to achieve. It was seen as complex and too technical, with the quality of some qualifications questionable and not fit for purpose. Industry was particularly worried about the quality of qualifications linked to learnerships, and the relative demise of the trades.

This review was extensive, and characterised by sharp and seemingly irreconcilable philosophies about what deserves to be called a “qualification”. This review ultimately culminated into the Joint Policy Statement released by the Ministers of Education and Labour in October 2007. This Statement recognised the need for a differentiated qualifications dispensation that can give structure and recognition to the different forms of learning. This gave rise to the need for the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations to be established as a body to support and improve quality assurance for learning in and for the workplace. The agreements in the Joint Policy Statement have been reflected in new and amended legislation on NQF implementation.

The National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act 67 of 2008) makes provision for the establishment of three Quality Councils (QCs) to each manage their own sub-framework - one for Higher Education Qualifications for universities, one for General and Further Education Qualifications for colleges and one for Occupational Qualifications.

These coordinated sub-frameworks fall within a single National Qualifications Framework and are broadly overseen by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

The Statement also precipitated an amendment to the Skills Development Act which made provision for the establishment of the QCTO (SDAct, 2008).

With the existence of the two councils; the Council on Higher Education to monitor learning at universities and Umalusi overseeing learning in the general and further education institutions, our NQF can only take firmer ground when we provide structure for learning in and for the workplace. We are gathered here today to celebrate the launch of the third Quality Council: the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). As the Minister of Higher Education and Training, I am delighted to be able to launch the QCTO today for at least four reasons:

**Firstly**, the bringing together of higher education institutions, Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges, Adult Education and Training and the skills development sector into a single Department of Higher Education and Training provides a powerful basis for addressing education and training in an integrated way. Our department has the responsibility to develop the country’s education and training institutional capacity and resources into a coherent but diverse and differentiated post school learning system, serving adults and youth within the framework of the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRD-SA) and relate with industrial policy.

The important role that the QCTO will play within this landscape cannot be over emphasised – because learning at and for work is necessary if workplaces are to become more productive, if workers are to rise to more decent jobs and if the unemployed and community members are to initiate and improve ventures in the informal economy. This dimension of learning is also vital for young graduates who, without workplace learning, are more likely to remain unemployed.

This pipeline must be further cemented by the establishment of the National Artisan Moderating Body which will accredit decentralised centres to provide trade testing facilities

across the length and breadth of the country, especially at our FET colleges. We expect the QCTO to support the establishment of the NAMB as one of its priorities. By so doing, the QCTO is key to my department's vision of strengthening FETs to play a major role in artisan development in order to serve a growing number of young people and adults.

**Secondly**, my department aims to improve entry points into and pathways through the learning system, and enhance the quality of learning wherever it takes place. The QCTO will bring the needs of industry closer to the education and training system to better meet the aspirations of youth and adults and to ensure that education, training and skills development initiatives respond adequately to our social and economic needs. It will ensure qualifications are not only linked to labour market needs but are also linked to and build on qualifications from the other institutions. More learners from HE and FE institutions need to proceed to the skills development system and the workplace seamlessly, with easy pathways across the different learning sites. We regard the QCTO as the glue in this system.

To achieve this, we expect the QCTO to work closely with the South African Qualifications Authority, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) and the Council on Higher Education. My department will set in place mechanisms to ensure that this happens and is not left to chance. Given the contested terrain and journey traversed, I would like to emphasise that the success of our work is dependent on our quality councils working in unison.

**Thirdly**, the QCTO has to play the role of developing and sustaining public confidence in the quality assurance of skills development. The public must have confidence in the QCTO as it exercises its professional duties and its certification process.

The QCTO has a major contribution to make in the skills development arena and to our country. We have some very fine traditions in our skills development community which we must cherish and nurture, and we also have some bad habits which we must weed out. The QCTO should be able to distinguish those and act as a guide and guardian as we strive to improve the quality of our skills development system and ensure the competence of learners who have been certified through the Occupational Qualifications Framework.

**Lastly**, the QCTO completes the architecture of the South African National Qualifications Framework. When we set out to develop our reconstruction and development framework in education and training, it embodied the dreams of many South Africans for recognition, affirmation and portability for ongoing learning and development. We must continue to develop an NQF that also includes recognition of prior learning and these other goals.

For example, too little research has been done on workplace learning, and its theoretical underpinnings. The QCTO must help to reverse this shortcoming and deepen our understanding of this important dimension of learning. It must also find ways to afford recognition to the skills of those adults in the workplace who have worked for years and learnt a great deal whilst working. At all times it must remain sensitive to the challenges that people with disabilities face and endeavour to find ways to overcome the many hurdles they face. It must also remain sensitive to class, racial and gender inequalities. And critically it must work with my department and other players to assist young people to undertake

workplace learning so that they can achieve employment after learning. The ANC manifesto in the early years of democracy emphasised the need to integrate education and training. In this way the QCTO becomes the gateway in ensuring workplace learning gets its proper credentials, and that the lives of ordinary workers are revolutionised.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to build a culture of ongoing learning in our workforce is not empty rhetoric. It is critical for a vibrant economy that is inclusive and whose benefits are shared by all, especially the workers. If the vision of COSATU for example was that the South African NQF must provide a learning pathway from sweeper to engineer, then the QCTO should work towards the achievement of this vision. Let sweepers actually become operators, let operators rise to tradespeople, let tradespeople become technicians and they in turn must be able to become technologists and engineers. Second chance foundational learning opportunities for adults must lay the basis for such progressions and ensure that those who were previously disadvantaged can pursue their dreams.

We are much clearer as government today that our education and training policy needs to serve the youth as they still have a lifetime ahead of them and much to contribute. The statistics of young people not in education, training or employment – some 2.8 million people - provides a stark reminder of the urgency of this task. We face huge challenges in trying to correct this situation and we must continue to build the capacity of our public institutions to absorb higher numbers of young people wanting to study and train.

Chairperson meeting this challenge goes beyond the work of the QCTO – all engaged in the work of education, training and skills development have a role to play to help meet this challenge. However the QCTO has a vital role to play. We now know that college training is, on its own, not enough. If workplace learning does not complement the learning done at colleges we could well find that the youngsters we work so hard to train remain unemployed after they qualify. Finding ways to align the workplace qualifications to those provided at institutions like the colleges will be a major help in addressing this problem.

The QCTO can also assist us by ensuring that the learning that takes place in workplaces is of a high quality so that the pass rates of those that take trade tests and other similar exit assessments pass at an increasing rate and swell the ranks of our skilled workforce. We certainly do not need poor quality workplace training as this will fuel the fears of trade unionists that young people are simply brought in as cheap labour to displace older workers. Needless to say, we expect the quality of learnerships and other skills programmes, as well as learning and workplace opportunities for all our young people, to improve.

Before I announce the Board, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Minister of Labour, Minister Membathisi Mdladlana, and the previous Minister of Education, Minister Naledi Pandor on their role in finalising the NQF review. In particular I would like to thank the Minister of Labour who supported, through his department, the work of the NQF / QCTO Project Steering Committee and the inclusion of the QCTO in the Skills Development Amendment Act, 2008.

I also want to make special mention of GTZ (The German Technical Co-operation) which provided technical support to the study team which brought us to where we are today and

played a critically important supportive role in preparing drafts for discussion and background work which enriched the work every step of the way. Their contribution to the work done on the Organising Framework for Occupations is worth special mention as it provides a foundation on which the work of the QCTO has been built.

GTZ has indicated its willingness to continue supporting skills development following its transfer to the Ministry and Department of Higher Education and Training – for which we are most grateful.

In appreciation, I hereby would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the GTZ Country Director, Mr Peter Conze, GTZ and the staff of GTZ for the commitment and support that the South African Government has received from you. I look forward to continuing a positive relationship with you.

To the Board of QCTO, I want to say that as we today celebrate the launch of the QCTO and your appointment we have many expectations which I have all the confidence you will fulfil.

There are many challenges and hard work that lies ahead and I look forward to receiving your advice on the policy propositions that have been prepared for your consideration.

And now for the big moment, I want to welcome the members of the QCTO to stand up as I mention their names. The members of the QCTO are:

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name and Surname</b>
Chairperson of the QCTO	Coastal KZN FET College / SACPO	Mr Wilson Nzimande
Acting Executive Officer: QCTO	DHET	Ms Adrienne P Bird
The executive officer of the SAQA	SAQA	Mr. Samuel BA Isaacs
The executive officer of the NSA	NSA	Mr Firoz Patel
Acting CEO of the CHE and Chairperson on the Higher Education Quality Committee	CHE	Prof Rolf Stump
The chief executive officer of Umalusi	Umalusi	Dr Mafu S Rakometsi
Two members nominated by NEDLAC to represent organised labour	POPCRU	Ms Bonny Marekwa
	NUM	Mr Ecliff Tantsi
Two members nominated by NEDLAC to represent organised business		Ms Stella Carthy
		Mr. Willie Matthiae
Two members nominated by NEDLAC to represent organisations of community and development interests	NCASA	Mr. Thulane Mabuza
	FSCC	Mr. Francis Malesela Maleka

One member nominated by the Minister of Education to represent the interests of public education and training providers	DHET (FET)	Dr Bheki Mahlobo
One member nominated by the private providers of education and training to represent the interests of private education and training providers	Association of Private Training Providers of Education Training and Development	Dr Marina le Grange
Two additional members to represent the members of the State	DHET	Ms Elizabeth Thobejane
	DTI	Dr Julius Nyalunga

I congratulate you and thank you all for your willingness to serve on the QCTO. I do believe that the QCTO Board is comprised of a combination of very good skills, knowledge and expertise. Therefore I have confidence that you will excel in your duty.

I thank you