

DRAFT SUBMISSION TO THE SAQA BOARD FOR PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH IMMEDIATE PLAYERS:

REGARDING THE IMPUTATION THAT THE SAQA-KRG SITE VISITS FAILED TO IDENTIFY INAPPROPRIATELY QUALIFIED CANDIDATES

From the very start of the SAQA moderation of the Kha ri Gude (KRG) literacy campaign results there was awareness that some candidates had started above literacy level.

This matter was touched on in most if not all of the annual reports to the SAQA Board on the moderation process.

1. From the beginning it was essential to be clear that we were moderating results, NOT evaluating KRG. SAQA leadership was insistent on this point. There were political and other sensitivities about the matter. The moderation was concerned only with the reliability of the marking, and it was put repeatedly that the focus was on answering whether the portfolios reflected competence at ABET Level 1 in literacy and numeracy REGARDLESS of who wrote the portfolio.
2. Later a verification component was added using site visits. Here the concern was the authenticity of the portfolios and whether they reflected the actual competence of the learner involved - i.e. whether the learners who had ostensibly completed the portfolio could repeat the tasks reflected in their portfolios in an independent test. At no stage was the question of whether the learner was already competent before KRG required of the process – or realistically possible to answer. (Especially given that this was not a problem that was anticipated to be significant.)
3. Nonetheless, it was noted that some candidates seemed to have primary or even secondary education. When this matter was looked into (as an aside from the main task) it was found that:
 - a. The candidates with higher levels had reasons for wanting to be in KRG: they had not used literacy for 30 or 40 years; they wanted to learn literacy in English; the other content of KRG – especially the numeracy - was still of interest to them.
 - b. KRG intake data was very difficult to access. There was no possibility of verifying this during site visits, and KRG's management database did not yield entry levels – which fact emerged when the information was requested. The matter was nonetheless considered in the SAQA process. Three years ago a careful look at the issue, given the inevitable smallness of the sample, showed that it was on a small scale; two years ago it did seem that whole groups were over-qualified, but the evidence was impressionistic; in the last year a trend was

reported that voluntary educators might be feeling the need to pack their classes with adults who were already literate.

4. At a meeting between SAQA and the DBE in October 2015 the issue was explicitly raised by the SAQA team. Dr Marongwa Ramarumo admitted that it was a growing problem that she attributed to the ageing of the campaign.
5. It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that this matter was drawn to the attention of the DBE, the Minister, the auditors or whoever might have read the SAQA reports - as a matter of courtesy - BUT was not the responsibility of the SAQA quality assurance process.

It is seriously puzzling to know how the site visit process could verify candidates' pre-existing levels of qualification, especially when this was not a concern of the process. The independent test did ask for number of years of schooling completed, but this was a rough and ready source of information in terms of credibility. One wonders if the site visitors, in remote areas, faced mainly with old women struggling to hold their pens, should have asked them to produce authenticated university certificates?

The site visits and the whole moderation process, however well designed, managed and reported, were simply not meant to pick up this kind of thing. This was clearly out of bounds as it was part of the monitoring responsibility of KRG structures.

Additional note: A similar issue arose towards the end of 2017. There was a flurry of concern that the promised number of site visits had not been conducted. The indignant query was raised because of an auditor's report seen in the press. This, however, related to the management of KRG and referred to site visits required of the DBE or KRG's management. The SAQA moderation report offered ample evidence that more site visits had been conducted – against considerable odds - than the budgeted 300 (all within cost).

The issue is being escalated to the SAQA Board for its information because the imputations and their implications:

- reflect negatively on the competence and commitment of the SAQA team;
- cast an unjustified shadow over one of SAQA's nobler achievements;
- put SAQA itself in a poor light.