



higher education
& training

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NPPSET: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE TASK TEAM WORKPLANS

This document was discussed at the 22 January 2016 meeting of the Task Team Oversight Group for the NPPSET development process. The document has been informed by the initial meetings of the three subsector task teams (HE, TVET and CET) and reflects the agreements made at the Oversight Group meeting. It will be used to guide the work of each task team, to ensure some uniformity in the development of the Plan. The document was also presented to the DHET Steering Committee on 5 February 2016 for discussion and agreement. It has been broadly supported as a guiding document for the NP-PSET Task Teams.

APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR PSET

The NPPSET will be a PSET Sector Plan. We need a Plan that government can use to develop, build, and support a PSET system. The Plan should be practical, realistic, linked to the White Paper and other relevant policy documents, and achievable.

We need to think about the following key questions to guide the development of the NPPSET:

- Putting providing institutions at the centre of how we think about the work of the DHET—all other institutions, structures, and systems are there to support, develop, build, and monitor providing institutions.
- How do we make the component parts of PSET work like a system?
- What can be simplified in the system? What can be made less bureaucratic, more streamlined, and less repetitive? Reporting is a key issue here.
- What are the catalytic drivers that will push the system in the direction that we want it to go? What are the levers for the system as a whole? How can impact be replicated through the system as a whole and through which key factors? What will make the PSET system behave like a new (emerging) system?
- How can we start to fix/unblock immediate problems in ways that start shaping the system that we want in the long term? How can the NPPSET build on existing structures and capacity, working with what we already have? What trade-offs will be necessary?

- How can the DHET build capacity and appropriate structures for its own operations (reconceptualization of the organogram), and to shift other parts of the system?
- Who are the students who should be in the system, who are entering the system and in the system, and what are their needs?
- Flexibility: the plan needs to allow for flexible and differentiated growth in different areas, and cannot be rigid.
- There is a need to provide a coherent argument for the appropriate funding of the sector, in difficult economic and fiscal conditions.
- Spatial mapping: how can institutional offerings and profiles be maximised according to population needs?; How to stimulate the neighbourhood effect between institutions in close geographic proximity?; What are the possibilities for mixed institutions, shared resources, and education precinct models?
- The language of the plan must not be overly technocratic and purely instrumental. People must be able to see themselves in it. The human dimension of the system must be visible and overt.
- Focus on the PEOPLE: who are the people who want to study? Who want to be part of the system? Who are the people who are teaching? Who want to teach?
- How can we build on existing work and capability in the system?
- The plan must avoid (and where necessary eradicate):
 - Duplication or overlap of functions;
 - Consultancy-based models which are expensive and don't build institutional capacity;
 - Ad hoc short term models;
 - Volunteer models which are not sustainable and which often don't draw in the right people.
- The Plan must contain clear targets, benchmarks and indicators, with clear responsibilities outlined for different role-players.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF WORK TO BE ADDRESSED BY TASK TEAMS

For each category, we need to understand:

What is the Vision for this sub-sector?

What needs to be done in this area?

What policies exist in this area?

What needs to be unblocked?

What is being done in this area, and what is not currently being done, but is a function that needs to be addressed?

What contextual factors need to be considered in the development of the Plan in each sub-sector?

What is the role of different institutions in each of these areas? Which institutions are playing in which areas? What are they doing? Where are the overlaps? In the future, who should do what in each section?

What are the main strengths, weaknesses, challenges in each sector for each of these issues? And across the sector?

What are the policy implications? What policies need to be changed?

One way of conceptualizing the work of the Task Teams would be for them to start mapping out their sector by answering these questions for each of the areas. Below a few ideas are presented to start addressing some of the questions. It is recognised that these categories do overlap in some ways and some may be more closely linked than they appear in this document. However, this document should be seen as a broad guiding frame, rather than a rigid and static framework.

1. Analyzing supply and demand

We need to understand what types of qualifications are likely to be needed in the short, medium, and long term. (We need to bear in mind that while many of the offerings in the post-school space are occupational, not all are, and general qualifications also have value, even when there are no clear labour market signals relating to them in the short-term.)

Demand from students?

Demand from the labour market?

Demand from employers?

Demand from society?

The DHET is building a Skills Planning Unit. A whole range of initiatives are currently underway. The challenge will be to bring them together, and improve the data that is generated and how it is used. The LMIP should start generating information soon. The EU project provides some guidelines as to how this should be used, what the Skills Unit should do, how demand should be analyzed and how it should feed into supply. If we can get these functioning as per plans, this will at last give the DHET a meaningful role in this regard. There are various other small projects happening through the planning branch which could supplement this.

Where are the main current and foreseen problems? Where are the gaps? How does this work relate to institutions in the different sectors? What kinds of information do the different sectors need from a Skills Planning Unit in order to plan for provision? Where should this information be channelled? How can we guide the setting up of this function in DHET to make the best possible use of available systems and data, and supply the most useful possible information to sectors? Can we start, for example, with something fairly simple which looks at the most needed qualifications and a rough sense of numbers?

What could be the role of Occupational Teams and other mechanisms?

2. Qualifications: what should the institutions be offering?

We can't organize our institutions if we don't have our qualifications organized. We need to attempt to bring more simplicity and coherence to the NQF.

There are some problems everywhere (the HEQSF is still probably unnecessarily complex and there are still concerns from UoTs about the qualifications) but the main challenge seems to be in the area of occupational qualifications.

Qualifications must be developed that qualify people to work in occupations. But the area is riddled with problems, some of which include:

- Qualifications are far too narrow—there is a one-on-one correspondence between qualifications and OFO codes which needs to be ended, and sensible aggregation to support about 300 qualifications needs to be instituted. Many OFO codes represent jobs not occupations. We can't have 2000 qualifications.
- There is overlap and duplication: the same groups of individuals tend to be drawn into developing qualifications, developing curricula, developing integrated assessments such as trade tests.
- Employer involvement remains an ongoing problem. We have not resolved where and how to involve employers. In many instances they are unwilling. In other instances even when they are involved they don't like the product of the qualifications.
- There are no syllabi being developed. But colleges and other providers in the TVET space are not equipped to develop their own. What will be the role of SAIVCET in this area?
- There is little institutional capacity in DHET or QCTO to manage these processes and the QCTO processes are heavily dependent on *ad hoc* consultant based systems. The model of qualification development is extremely expensive and complex and does not build institutional capacity (QDFs, CEPs, and so on). It is also problematic because it is paid for by sponsors of qualifications, which means we are likely to get qualifications favoured by certain wealthy interest groups.
- It is hard to align the occupational qualifications below higher education, which have national curricula, with those on the HEQSF including professional qualifications, which are institutional. There seem to be some areas in which substantially divergent logic in qualifications design have applied where higher level occupational qualifications have been developed.
- The focus on articulation often leads to the design of qualifications which are not fit-for-purpose in terms of work. This is aggravated by a lack of bridging programmes. The design, development, and funding of bridging programmes is a serious gap in the system.
- There is still duplication, overlap, and uncertainty about the roles of respective roles of the NCV, the technical matric, and the Nated courses.

How do we remedy these? What needs to be done? Where does action need to happen? By whom?

One possible solution to this for the occupational teams below higher education could be the creation of Occupational Teams for each of the aggregated occupational areas discussed above, which are located under the new SAIVCET function in DHET, which will have 9 permanent staff members overseeing broad occupational areas. This would mean each occupational coordinator in DHET having oversight of between 10 to 30 Occupational Teams. They would primarily be located in DHET as permanent standing committees, but would support the work of QCTO. These teams would consist of experts from the providers. They would be drawn in to develop the qualification, or revise it, develop the curriculum, develop the integrated assessment, and for programme accreditation. They would have strategic consultation with employers at key points.

For occupational qualifications in higher education, professional councils should play this kind of role. DHET may need to support this where there are none or where they are weak, possibly with something like the model discussed above for the lower level qualifications. It is possible that some programmes at UoT level could benefit from a nationally developed syllabus, if representatives from institutions were involved in the development of it.

We need a system redesign. School learners should be streamed earlier. We need the NCV for NEETs. When we differentiate colleges we may need second chance colleges for kids who need to finish matric or equivalent. Bring together technical matric and NCV. Have a single curriculum for as many subjects as possible.

The examinations system also needs to be streamlined.

We also need, at a broader level, to take decisions on the roles of the different qualifications in the TVET space.

3. Size and shape

The Plan must give direction to shape the PSET system we want to see in the long term, showing how we can build on our current institutions, and create a system with the range and types of institutions desired.

What do we have now? What do we want to get to? How do we go from where we are to where we want to get to? How do we balance the growth imperative while optimising efficiencies in the system?

What are the key issues for each sub-sector? Bricks and mortar as well as enrolments and differentiation.

We need to think through the strengths and weaknesses of our current institutions, the kinds of offerings we provide through them, and how we can start to shift this or build on this as necessary.

For example, for Community Colleges, we need models of institutions. As we know the former Public Adult Learning Centres were mainly not even physical institutions, and have predominantly part-time contract staff. How do we consolidate that? We are employing Directors, but there seems to be still a lack of a clear vision for the sector. Who are the target groups? How do we build on what is there to provide

something more dynamic? What are the kinds of institutions we envisage, and how can we get there?

For all institutions we need to ask how much if any growth the system can sustain right now, and what we need to do in order to support growth. How do we share resources across institutions?

We need to think about private provision in each sector: What role do we want them to play? How do we support and incentivise them to do it?

4. Building institutions to deliver learning programmes and research

This is the heart of the PSET system: the delivery and assessment of learning programmes. For each sector we need to think about:

- What is the purpose?
- What is the scope?
- What is the range of activities?

Some issues:

- In the university space the issues are well known and mapped out: curriculum transformation, staffing, throughput, undergraduate education, infrastructure and campuses.
- Institutional support
- We need to think through how institutions can better share services and share resources.
- How do the Quality Councils support and contribute to the improvement of provision? What are the problems, what are the gaps? The State and the public need to be assured that institutions have the appropriate capacity to offer qualifications. Where there are gaps, institutions need to be supported to improve. Private institutions which are unable to meet requirements must not be allowed to make a profit by falsely claiming that they can, and should be denied accreditation.
- Curriculum and assessment: what needs to be done? What are the roles of different institutions? What are the problems, what are the gaps? This is different at different levels of the system, and different types of interventions might be needed. For example, with universities, there may be a need for greater engagement with professional councils in some instances, and support in capacity development in some instances. For universities of technology there may be value in some instances by attempting to revive something like the old convenor system. For colleges there could be considerable value in getting together national teams, in order to develop syllabi, as discussed in the Occupational Team idea above. There are lots and lots of initiatives at the moment, particularly focused on the colleges—are they coordinated, do they support each other?
- Duplication? Gaps where some qualifications are left without well developed curricula?

Is there sufficient centralization of assessment in the TVET space? Role of NAMB and QCTO? In the immediate short-term, sorting out exam systems is the biggest priority for DHET in terms of Nated and NCVs: there are 11 exam cycles with supplementaries per annum and there is very little capacity to run this. We could, for example, cut some immediately, and only examine certain levels nationally.

RPL

Bridging programmes

Infrastructure

Monitoring and evaluation at an institutional level

Modes of delivery

Learning that does not lead to a qualification

5. Funding

How do our institutions get supported financially in such a way that best builds their capacity according to the size and shape envisaged? How do we ensure that funding from the fiscus and funding from other sources including the skills levy work together, and not at odds with each other, to support and build the system?

What are the problems?

Of course the biggest problem is insufficient funding, which is bringing many of our institutions to the brink of a precipice. There are many short-term crises which are being addressed, albeit with problems remaining.

Some of the other problems include:

Funding models linked to learners and programmes can make it very difficult to build institutional stability in small or weak institutions. The logic that makes sense to fund universities simply does not work in the TVET or Community College space, and there needs to be serious thought put into what kinds of funding modalities could build and support these institutions.

Different qualifications still funded through different modalities—differences between ‘national quals’ and ‘occupational quals’. This makes institutions (especially TVET colleges) schizophrenic and leads to intense instability, and makes it difficult to build institutional capacity. Some of the differences are being eroded for Nated through A21 processes, but we need to figure out how to do this more systematically.

NSFAS

What is the implication of the current #feesmustfall protests and developments for the whole PSET system?

6. Governance, management, and leadership

Building the capabilities needed in the system. What kind of governance structures are needed to support the different levels of the system?

7. Planning

How can planning across the system be streamlined and become more integrated and efficient?

8. Quality assurance

How well is the QA system working in each area? What changes are needed to improve QA across the system?

9. Workplace access, responsiveness, and work integrated learning

Compulsory workplace component of occupational qualifications: Learners need to gain workplace experience in all occupational qualifications, at some point. In some instances—apprenticeships and learnerships—there is a need for contractual relationships with employers. Role of SETAs in linking employers and institutions

There seems to be some improvement here, particularly at the level of colleges.

We need to carefully monitor the new requirements to build workplace-experience into qualifications to make sure it is not preventing people from getting qualifications.

We need a greater role for SETAs in improving rates of workplace experience.

We need to find models and approaches for consulting with employers without expecting them to be part of time-consuming qualification and curriculum design processes.

Need to be clear about the points of intersection, relationships with employers, etc.

10.Data and information and Monitoring and Evaluation

We need to find ways of ensuring that we collect the necessary data in ways that are useful to us in managing and understanding the system. We need to identify the key success indicators that we will use to measure the performance of the system going forward? These may well differ from those currently in use.

What framework for data collection and management need to be put in place to support effective decision-making in each area? How will the Plan be evaluated? Are we monitoring the system effectively? What theories of change underpin our policy assumptions in each area?

11.Structure and functioning of DHET

What is the structure necessary to provide adequate support to institutions?

Size and structure of government, nature of government work

Plan must also address the roles and responsibilities of institutions outside of the DHET

Monitoring and evaluation: role and function

12.Articulation, integration, and coordination

How do we achieve the main policy objectives of the White Paper on PSET?

How to get the component parts of PSET to operate as a “system”?

What is the role of different institutions in each of these areas? Which institutions are playing in which areas? What are they doing?

What are the main strengths, weaknesses, challenges in each sector for each of these issues? And across the sector?

Bridging programmes

Institutional relationships and meaningful collaboration, both within sub-sectors and across the PSET system

13. Policy and Legislative Implications

What policy and legislative implications are there for issues across all the above sections?