

# Conceptual shaping of learning outcomes in South Africa

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THIRD POLICY  
LEARNING FORUM

Defining, writing and using  
learning outcomes



 CEDEFOP  
European Centre  
for the Development  
of Vocational Training



21 and 22 June 2018

# Purpose of this presentation

Know the explicit conceptual basis for the learning (LO) approach in South Africa



**Know**

**Understand**



Understand how the LO approach has evolved and how it is applied in the South African context

**Do**



Learn from experience and apply in shaping policy and practice



## Presentation overview

**1. Context**

**2. Early conceptualisation under SAQA Act**

**3. Current NQF under NQF Act**

**4. Recent review**

**5. Summary and way forward**

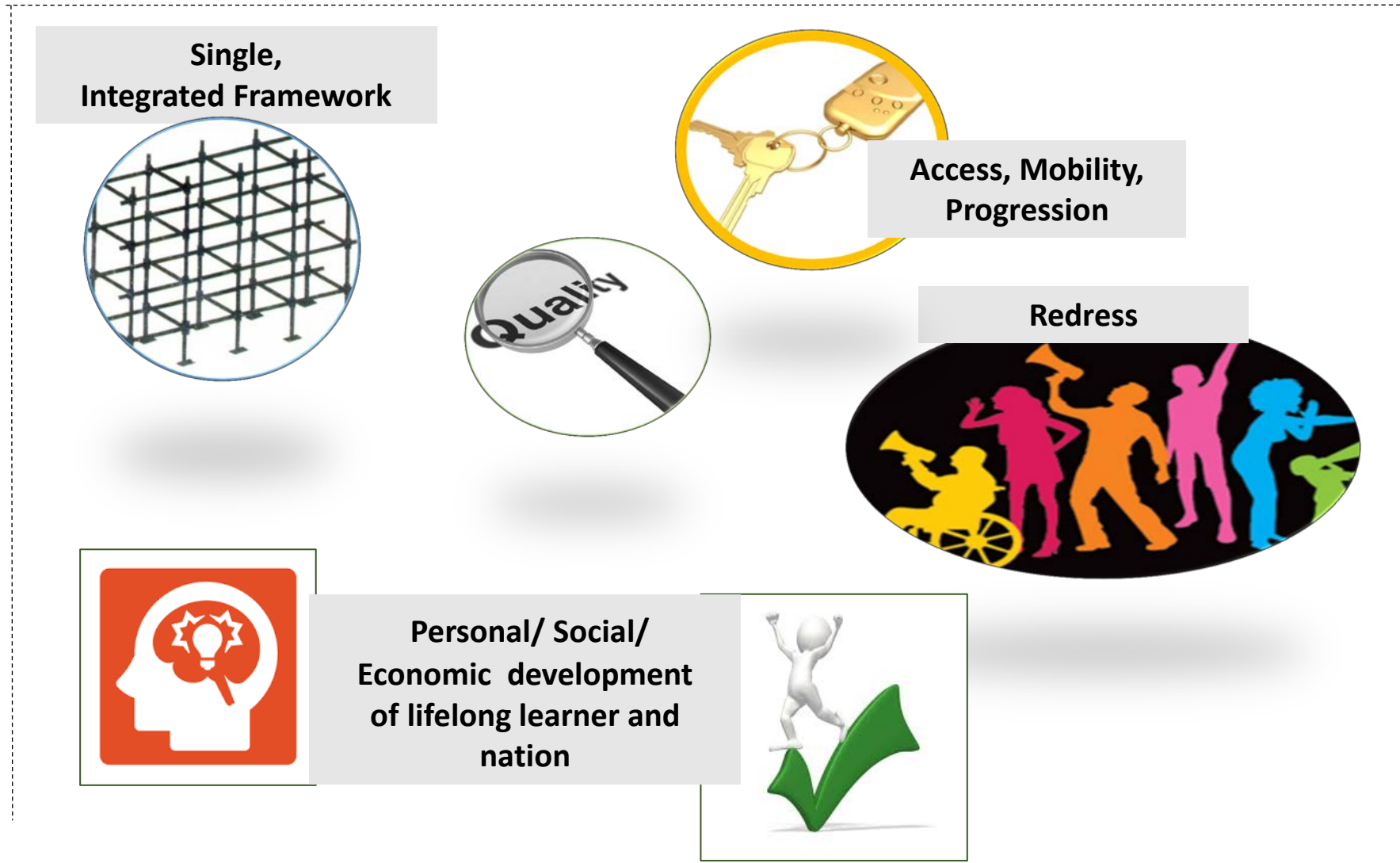
**Explicit conceptual basis for learning outcomes approach**



*An **integrated approach** to education and training, linked to the development of a new National Qualification Framework (NQF) **based on a system of credits for learning outcomes achieved, will encourage creative work on the design of curricula and the recognition of learning attainments** wherever education and training are offered.*

*It will open doors of opportunity for people whose academic or career paths have been needlessly blocked because their prior knowledge (acquired informally or by work experience) has not been assessed and certified, or because their qualifications have not been recognised for admission to further learning, or employment purposes.*

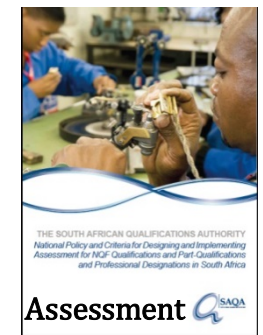
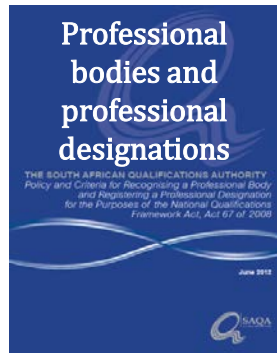
# Objectives/ purpose



**IMPORTANT:**

To a large extent, the objectives will determine the content and purpose of qualifications

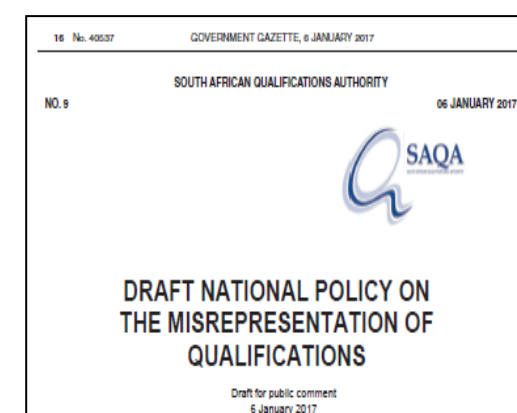
# Overarching NQF policies



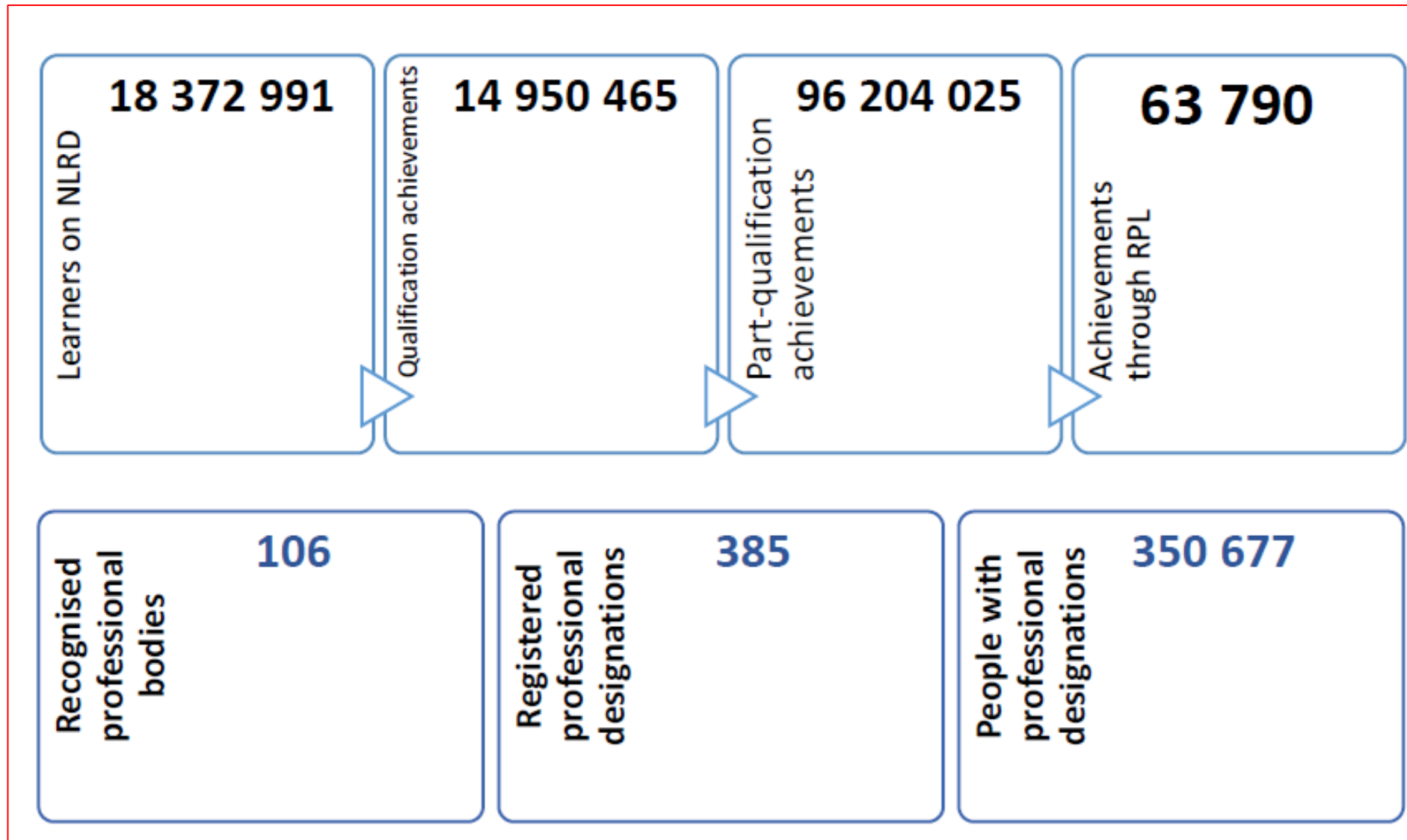
## System of collaboration



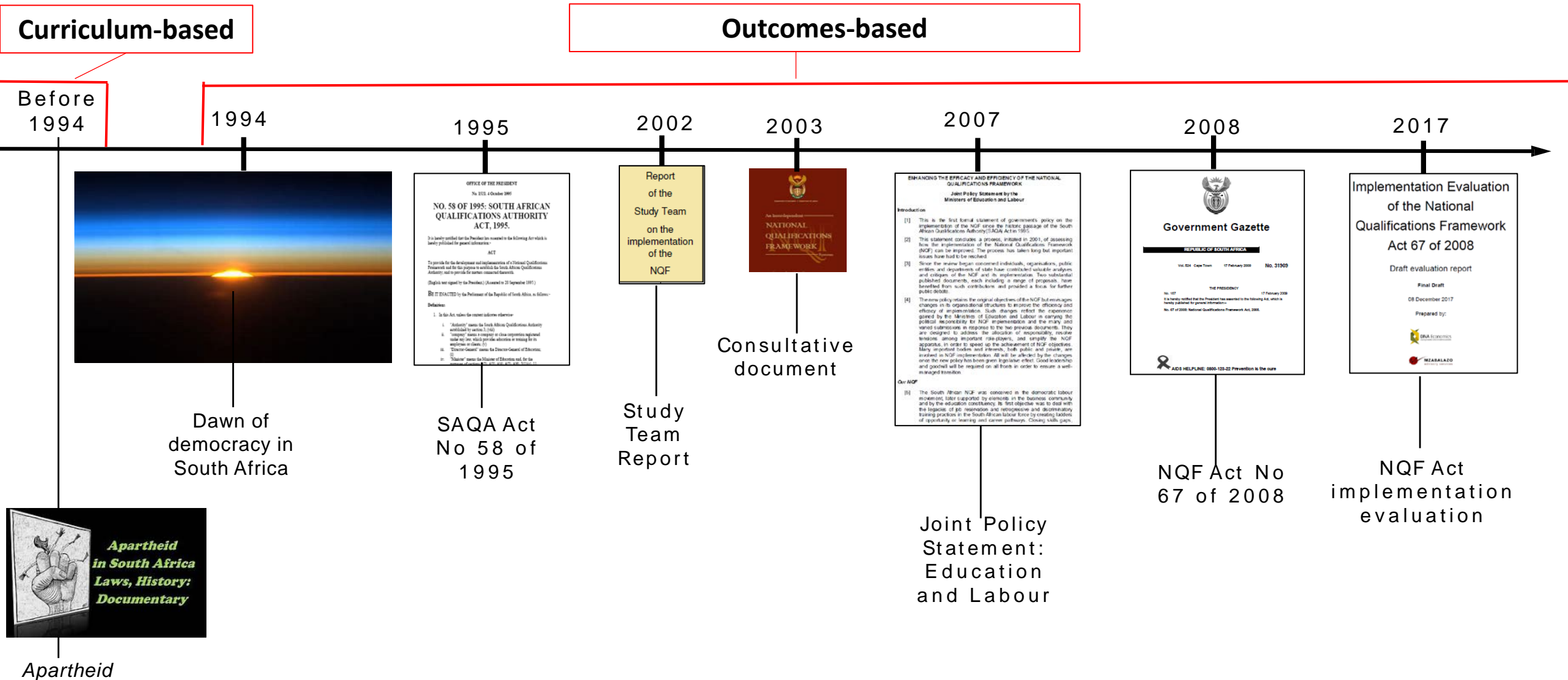
## NQF Implementation Framework



## NQF achievements: Snapshot of NLRD as at 31 March 2018



# Snapshot of learning outcomes timeline



# Conceptualisation under SAQA Act

- **Conceptualisation of NQF shaped learning outcomes approach (LO) and how LOs were packaged in qualifications;**
- **NQF developed to achieve objectives-** national purpose of **democratic transformation**; encapsulated in SAQA Act 58 of 1995; conceived in democratic labour movement; later supported by business and education sector;
- **Comprehensive:** (all education, training and skills development); **Integrated** concept linked to democratic project: **inclusive of different learning cultures** so one is not valued over another, stakeholders colleagues, not competitors; important lever for redress;
- **Eight level NQF** (Level 1 and Level 8 open-ended); ***SAQA was central and accredited the more than 30 Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQAs); The ETQAs accredited providers; Twelve National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and many Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs); NSBs facilitated and developed qualifications;***

**Two types of qualifications could be registered: whole qualifications and qualifications based on unit standards**

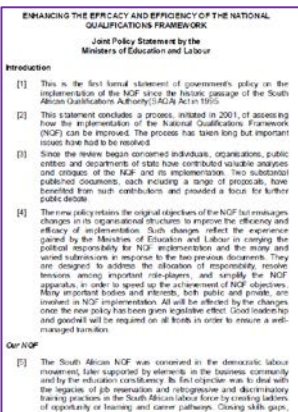
- Qualifications based on Exit Level Outcomes (ELOs) and Associate Assessment Criteria (AACs); a minimum of 120 credits;
- Qualifications based on unit standards: comprising specific outcomes and AACs; can be less than 120 credits but must be linked to a whole qualification; Whole qualification must not be less than 120 credits;

- Implementation not a spontaneous, social activity;
- Ministers initiated review in response to range of concerns from NQF stakeholders;
- Resulted in joint policy statement by Ministers of Labour and Education



## Some concerns raised:

- Too many NQF bodies leading to duplication of effort; Conflict of stakeholder interests; lack of synergy of Government interests;
- NQF architecture (policies, regulations, procedures structures, language) complex, confusing, unsustainable;
- Poor application of stakeholder principle (academics unhappy); qualifications experts not given their due;
- Focus on unit standards too behaviouristic and narrow; Not happy with one-size-fits-all approach of NQF architecture; does not recognise diversity of approaches and practices; etc.
- Application in schools problematic as adopted as method (called outcomes-based education) and not as underlying philosophy;



## Shaping of learning outcomes:

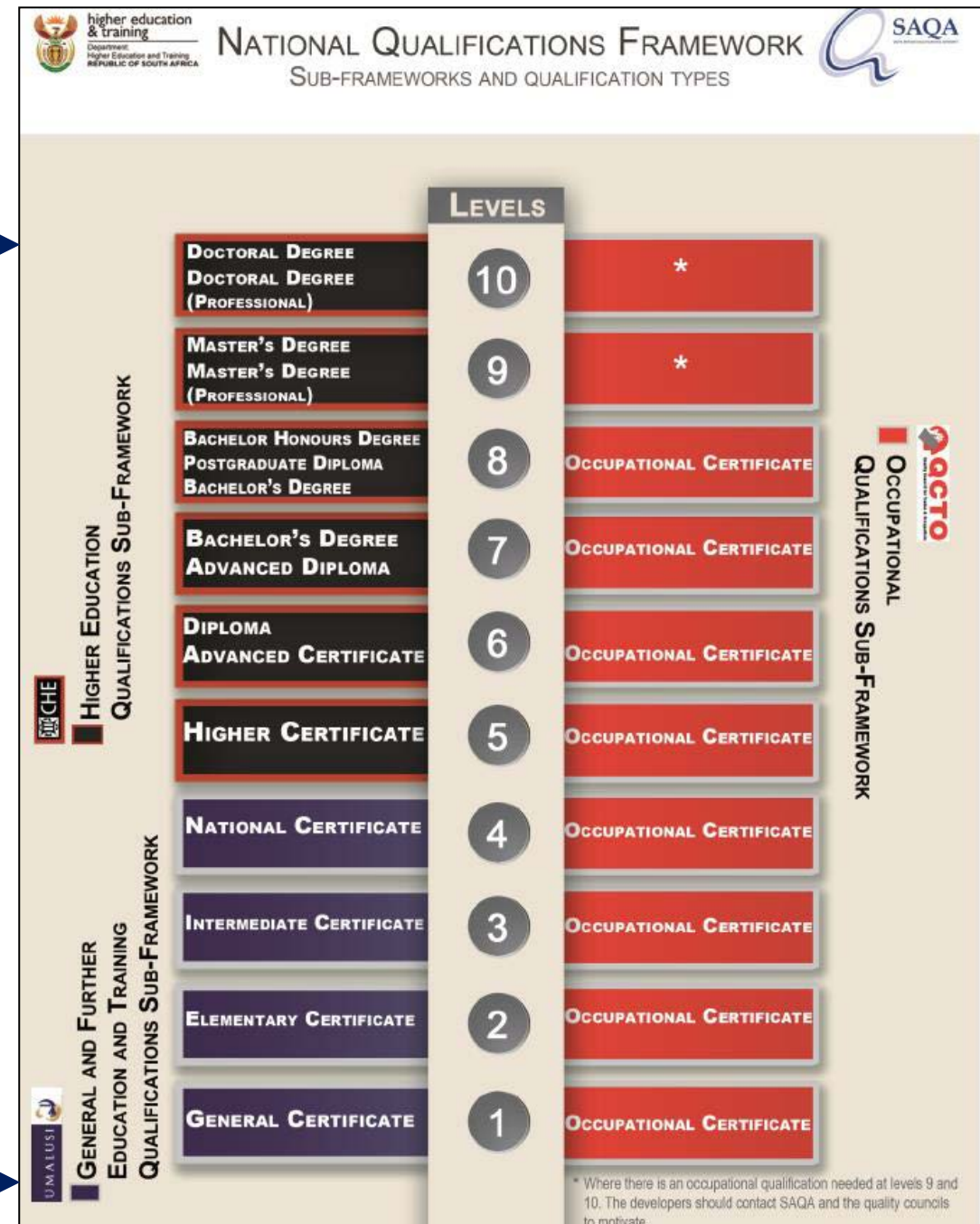
- Acknowledge **room in NQF for other units of learning**: modules and unit standards- nationally **recognised building blocks that support CAT and RPL**, allow achievement of exit level outcomes and enable incremental assessment of learning;
- Acknowledge **misunderstanding about LOs** in that they are **conceptualised in different ways** e.g. in **delivery** (completion of modules lead to specified outcomes; or through demonstrated occupational competence including workplace experience); acknowledge that different contexts require different kinds of **assessment**; No objection to different parts of education using **terms most appropriate to their context** e.g. module outcomes; assessment standards; unit standards professional standards, etc.
- **Occupational and professional practice brought into NQF**- professional bodies collaborate with relevant education institution to ensure relevant qualification standards;
- **Ten level NQF structure** reflecting qualification requirements;
- In **integrated** system –important to **recognise different forms of learning appropriately**; **Revised architecture for Quality Assurance**: Three Quality Councils; establish Sub-Frameworks of the NQF;
- Limit number of ETQAs; disestablish NSBs; RPL implementation prioritised; **Clear roles and responsibilities**; SAQA apex body, provide leadership, support, facilitate; SAQA Board re-constituted to not more than 15 members

### Recommendations



# Conceptual shaping under NQF Act

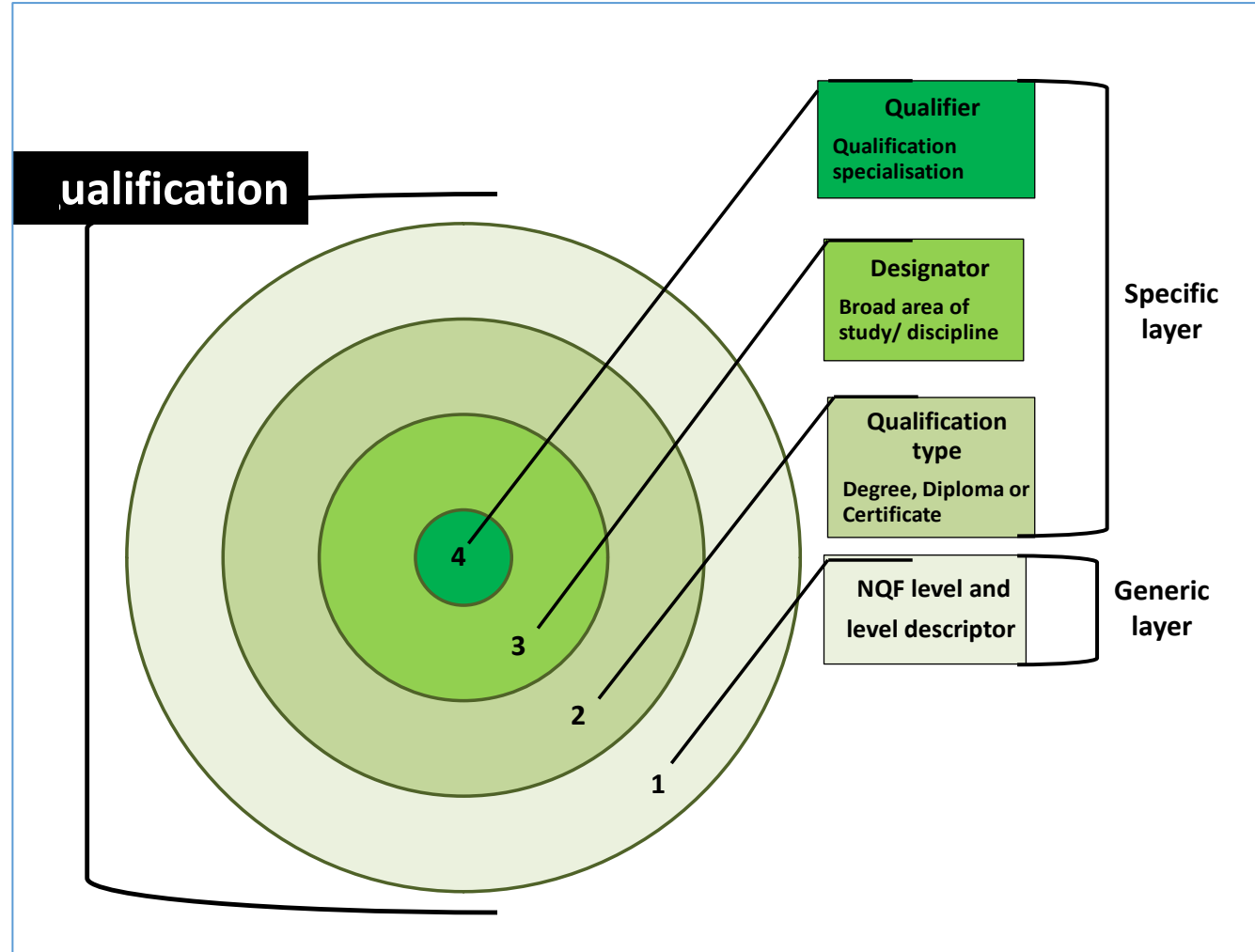
- Three NQF Sub-Frameworks for the three sectors
- Still integrated: One set of level descriptors for the whole NQF, Level 1 open-ended
- Four NQF bodies: SAQA and three Quality Councils;



# Learning outcomes in qualification design

## Registered qualifications and part-qualifications:

- Qualifications based on exit level outcomes (ELOs) and associated assessment criteria (AACs);
- Part-qualifications based on ELOs and AACs: can be unit standards, modules with credits, units of learning, etc.;
- QCTO qualifications must consist of three components: theoretical; practical and workplace;



Only Quality Councils can recommend qualifications for NQF registration (to SAQA).

Only SAQA can register qualifications on NQF.

Quality Councils guide curriculum and modules for their Sub-Framework

Example: Basic Education (schooling sector)

Umalusi recommends qualifications for its Sub-Framework

- Department of Basic Education (DBE) designs curriculum and assessment,
- Umalusi quality assures it.

# Recent review: key findings of NQF evaluation (2017)

**People interviewed: very little criticism related to conceptualisation of LOs; general acceptance of LO approach**

## Implementation Evaluation of the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008

Draft evaluation report

Final Draft

08 December 2017

Prepared by:



- Refine NQF objectives;
- Refine governance: Responsibilities of SAQA and QCs to state more clearly what each will contribute: cut down on duplication of responsibilities; how governance can be more efficient;
- Rethink the way occupational qualifications are defined: theoretical, workplace, practical: not always possible to place in workplace;
- Improvement plan: future embedded in what study found;
- NQF amendment bill

### Recommendations



# Summary and way forward

## Way forward

- NQF concept, underpinned by learning outcomes is embedded in learning culture of South Africa
- Still some incoherence in some areas

## Set of proposals:

- Rethink occupational qualifications;
- How can the NQF be simplified, including streamlining of responsibilities;
- Clear improvement plan
- NQF amendment bill

## Shaping of LO approach under NQF Act

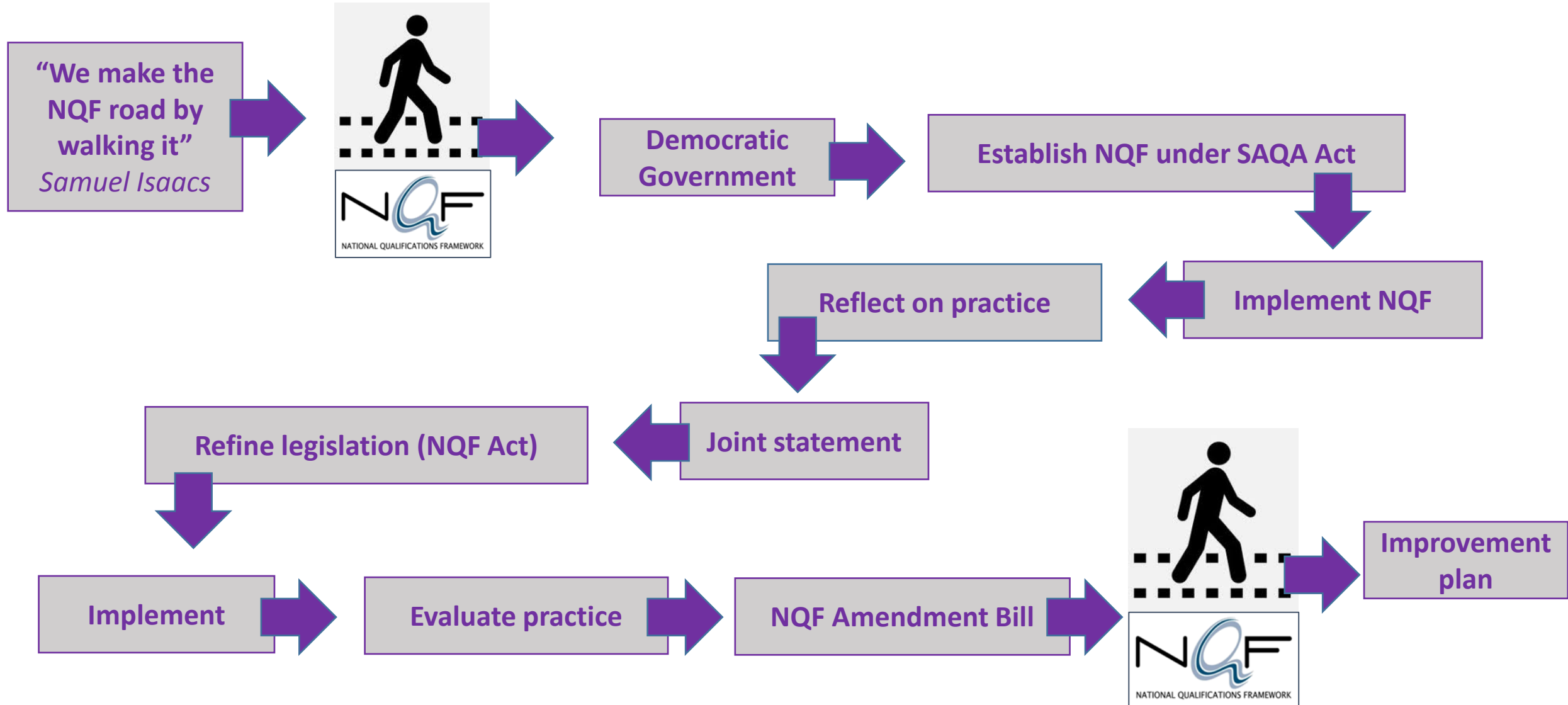
**Change:** Signaled by joint statement;

- Rethinking of LO approach and how it was shaped in qualifications and part-qualifications;
- Made provision for learning cultures to be respected; LOs packaged differently in each NQF Sub-Framework- speaks to differences in learning cultures in different education sectors;
- NQF Act brought professional qualifications into the space through recognition of professional bodies and registration of professional designations;
- NQF Act gave responsibility to four bodies: SAQA as apex; and three Quality Councils solely responsible for quality assurance of the Sub-Framework

## Shaping of learning outcomes (LO) approach under SAQA Act

- Conceptualised as instrument of democracy and inclusion;
- Shaped as qualifications based on exit level outcomes and qualifications based on unit standards; negotiated between academic institutions and workplaces;
- Set up to ensure integrated approach to education and training;
- Tension: large-scale rejection of LOs shaped in form of unit standards- too narrow, too behavioristic

# Policy learning and application in practice and policy refinement



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