12. South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the Context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR): Realities and Implications (Yuraisha Chetty)

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has been engaging with the discourse on the Fourth industrial Revolution (4IR), specifically within the education and training sector. SAQA initiated focused exploratory research to consider the positioning of SAQA and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) within the context of the 4IR, with a particular lens on the implications of the 4IR for the roles and responsibilities of SAQA, both from a broad organisational perspective as well as in terms of specific functional areas.

This contribution draws from a small, exploratory qualitative research study undertaken amongst a sample of management staff at SAQA. It provides a bird’s eye view of some of the key issues SAQA will need to consider as part of envisioning the future within the context of the 4IR. The study selected participants using purposive sampling, and participants represented directorates involved in various functions. The research sought to determine a) the key considerations, b) what would enable success, c) the potential barriers and addressing these barriers, and d) the implications of the 4IR on the roles and responsibilities of SAQA (and particular functions).

In terms of the key considerations, the main issues that emerged from responses pertained to the automation of SAQA’s work and the role of SAQA in ensuring the relevance of qualifications. The main enablers of success were as follows: collaboration, being open to change, funding, ensuring relevant qualifications and skills, and ensuring an appropriate Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and updated skills. Some of the reported barriers were the corollary of the reported enablers. According to respondents, the main barriers would be a lack of funding and resistance to change, amongst other things.

The study provides insights into the issues SAQA will need to engage with and provides an initial basis from which further dialogue and engagement can take place.
The NQF Act as Amended, Act No.12 of 2019, and the requirements thereof, such as having separate registers for misrepresented and fraudulent qualifications and part qualifications, and professional designations, amongst other things, will require SAQA to seek technological solutions where necessary, to enhance efficiencies.

SAQA will continue to deepen and enrich its understanding of the implications of the 4IR on its roles and responsibilities, by participating in both external and internal discussions and debates, keeping abreast of developments internationally, and conducting further research as necessary.

The full paper is available on the following link:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/75zwwxmakolktjc/SAQA%20and%20the%20NQF%20in%20the%20context%20of%20the%204th%20Industrial%20Revolution_Realities%20and%20Implications.pdf?dl=0

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