

The Role of Professional Associations in the South African Education and Training System

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ABSTRACTThe National Qualifications Framework Act (NQF Act 67) changed the landscape of professional bodies in the South African (SA) education and training system substantially by mandating the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to recognise professional bodies and to register their designations on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This study endeavoured to critically look at the roles and responsibilities of professional bodies as dictated by SAQA, against existing literature on the role of professional bodies, to determine what should be the role of professional bodies in the new SA education and training system. The research approach was quantitative and non-probability sampling, consisting of convenience and judgemental sampling techniques used to collect data using online questionnaires. The findings reveal that the impact of the implementation of the NQF Act had been very positive, and professions and professional bodies enjoy increased status and recognition, and that there is also a minimum standard for professions and professionals. Further, professional bodies will continue to play the traditional role in the new NQF landscape. Many professional bodies now have a formal constitution and their focus on life-long learning through continuous professional development (CPD) has increased, as has the award of professional designations.