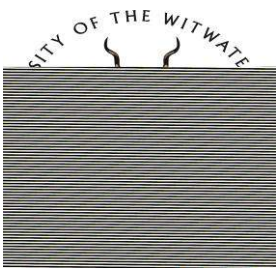


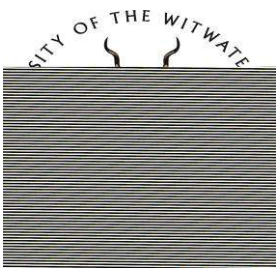
# Quality in Skills Development: is it in the eye of the beholder

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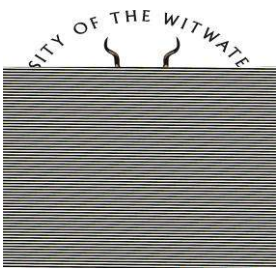
# Presentation outline

1. Introduction
2. The emergence of the quality assurance discourse in the South African education and training system
3. Developments in other countries
4. Claims made by the new QA system
5. However.....
6. Alternative models
7. Quality assurance in the South African skills development
8. Is quality in the eye of the beholder?
9. Conclusion



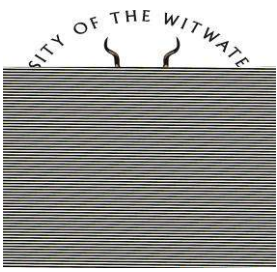
# 1. Introduction

- Many countries are struggling with making sense on how both education and work can make a contribution to the economic and social renewal of societies
- The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and reconfiguration of post-school are two major interventions internationally
- The South African NQF intervention subsequently informed policies of SETAs, QCs, Government and providers regarding quality issues in the system
- Quality assurance in SA has become such a heavy bureaucratic process, full of complex jargon, but not producing competent workers



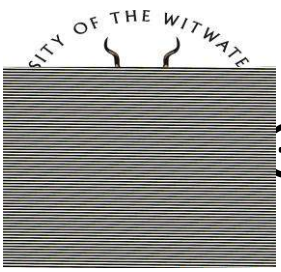
## 2. Emergence of Quality Assurance

- Both quality and standards in education enduring and universal goals that can be tracked to before the beginnings of public education.
- Quality and standards on the other hand have been associated with gate-keeping exercises in education, and in particular with respect to university entrance
- The self-justifying and self-seeking forms of standards maintaining has led to a need for a more transparent system in quality assurance
- New developments in setting standards for mass production in Industry, have been seen as providing the basis for the new approaches in education and training, e.g. ISO standards



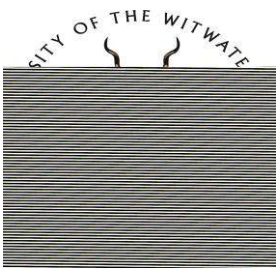
## 2. Emergence of Quality Assurance

- Central to the new approaches have been moves to ‘democratize’, or make public, the criteria for judgments of quality and standards.
- A further development has been the acceptance that quality in education can be straightforwardly quantified and measured.
- The old models relied on trusting highly valued institutions such as universities to determine standards
- In the last fifty years, upper secondary education and higher education has expanded and differentiated to many providers of education and training as well as progression routes from school.



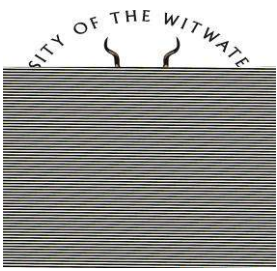
### 3. Developments in other countries

- Implicit system of using university based external examiners being complemented (sometimes replaced) by more formalised procedures of quality assurance.
- In vocational education, explicit national 'occupational standards' being developed.
- New system does not rely on trust, but on performance according to public criteria measured with compliance tools and evidence
- Shift of power from elite institutions to a new set of agencies and their associated consultants and full time officials who can interpret the new standards.



## 4. Claims made by the new system

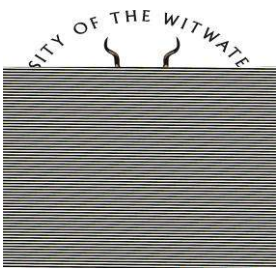
- By not relying on normative models and therefore not selecting suitable students for evidence of quality
- By making quality criteria explicit, claims to be more universalistic and fairer – therefore more congruent with democratic values
- By not relying specific institutions, quality can apply to workplaces and other sites
- Can be used to present critics as conservative and elitists only interested in protecting their special interests and privileges.



## 5. However.....

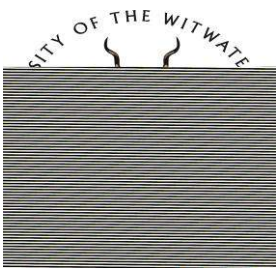
- The new system does not remove the links between power and definitions of quality – merely shift the basis of power by invoking rules rather than persons
- Neglects the extent to which relation between procedural compliance and quality is always problematic
- Introduces a new language and bureaucracy (made up of those who know the language and the rules) and a new kind of ‘technical authoritarianism’
- Process of disaggregating and aggregating quality has become the preserve of specially trained quality assurers whose expertise is based on procedures than content





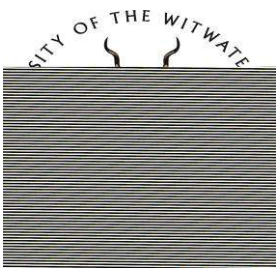
## However.....

- An 'emptying' of content from curriculum in 'outcomes-based education – a significant step contributing to the deskilling of craft, service and professional workers



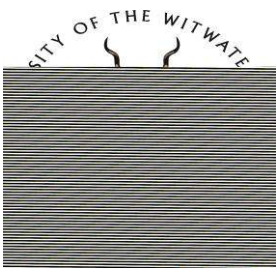
## 6. Alternative models of QA

1. Examinations
2. Accreditation
3. Institutional Audits
4. Inspections
5. Systemic evaluations



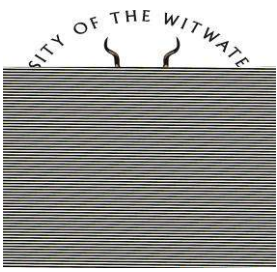
## 6.1. Examinations Models

- Associated with ‘high stakes’ examinations for university entrance
- Quality is linked to evidence that students have acquired appropriate subject or disciplinary knowledge
- Certification has a value that is independent of the candidate’s institution
- Examination models have a limited remit to the range of students they apply to, are inflexible and not responsive to change.
- They function well when there is a historical public trust and also require a huge administrative capacity



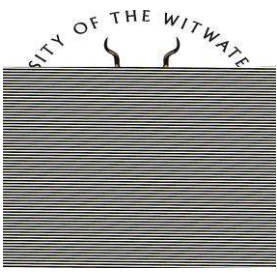
## 6.2. Accreditation models

- Models provide a midway point between centralised examinations (e.g. matric) and delegated assessments developed by SETAs
- Typically more associated with vocational qualifications and allow institution to relate to both local and national standards – more flexible
- The de-centralised model allows for a variation of standards
- Model generates an expanded bureaucracy in its army of assessors, verifiers, moderators and external verifiers and moderators
- Accreditation models often separate content from the process of accreditation in their emphasis on criteria and procedures



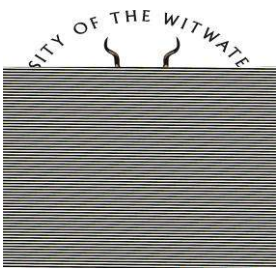
## 6.3. Inspection models

- Inspection models have not taken root in the SA institutions that offer vocational education and skills development programmes
- Examples of inspection can be found in the UK for example in the form of OFSTED
- The inspecting institution focuses on the activities of the institution as a whole, its achievements and the observations of individual students
- Inspections can complement examination models, but are expensive to carry out regularly. Model relies on institutionally bound provision and has limited remit on workplace learning



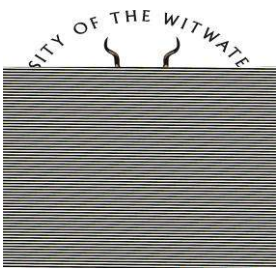
## 6.4. Institutional audits

- Institutional audits are often used by institutions of higher education
- Process is carried out by peers who spend a considerable amount of time evaluating the institutional capacity to function as an institution of higher education, perusing records on students, finances, policies, curriculum, and interviewing staff and students
- The basis for institutional audits is that these institutions are fairly autonomous and have the capacity to run their affairs reasonably and this process serves to verify this and to point out areas that need strengthening or intervening if things are seriously wrong.



## 6.5. Systemic evaluation models

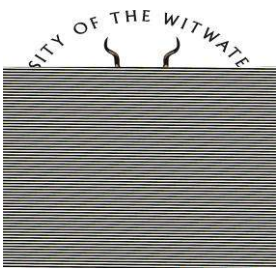
- Systemic models are not well developed in most countries
- Different from the other models but complimentary to each
- May involve institutional visits, testing of individual students. They are not designed to report on individual students or institutions but to report on the system as a whole
- Countries that have adopted some variants of this model will have LEAGUE TABLES of their institutions
- League Tables can be controversial in vocational education as this may reflect in part the social of its intake and its location.



## 7. QA in the SA system

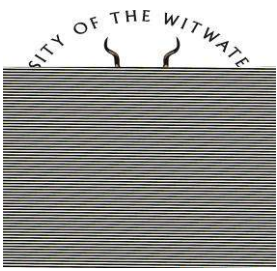
- A well established and externally controlled examination model in school education and public FET colleges in the case of N 1-3 courses and NCV
- N4-6 – a combination of DHET and institutional based examination system
- Learnerships and skills programmes – SETA based accreditation models (a variation)
- Trades apprenticeships – externally controlled assessments by INDLELA or SETAs through a decentralised assessment system





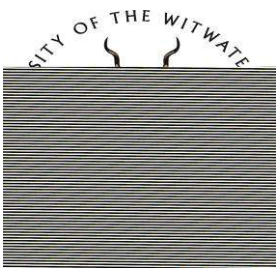
## 7. QA in the SA TVET system

- Overall, system has developed into either a highly centralised system or a highly varied and complex system of accreditation
- Quality system has focused extensively on qualification development than ensuring that what is provided is of acceptable quality
- Criticisms are rife about the low competence levels of graduating learners from the skills development system



# Is quality in the eyes of the beholder?

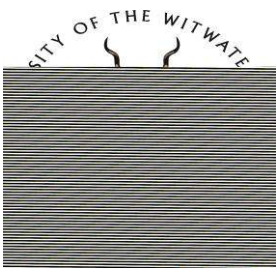
- Quality cannot be in the eyes of the beholder, but must be tied to the following issues in the skills development arena:
  - a. Quality of programmes being provided
  - b. Quality of institutional provision
  - c. Quality of assessments of learning
  - d. Quality in the system at large
- A less bureaucratic process of assuring quality that is less cumbersome but has conceptual rigour in its formation must be found.



# Is quality in the eyes of the beholder?

## a. Quality programmes:

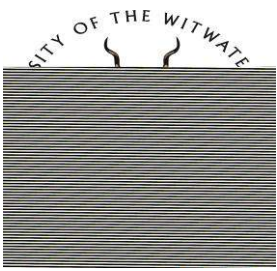
- Quality is best conceptualised inside the occupations than at NQF levels
- General vocational education has a lot to do with other disciplinary knowledge , e.g. science, mathematics, etc. and outcomes to be closely tied to the acquisition of this knowledge
- A different form of outcomes -based qualifications must be developed and should be characterised by:
  - A move away from a functional analysis of competences, but broad outcomes that serve as guide to programme development
  - A community of experts development and assessment process, where highly qualified workers and professional bodies can make judgments
  - An explicit understanding of the most suitable learning contexts



# Is quality in the eyes of the beholder?

## a. Quality provision:

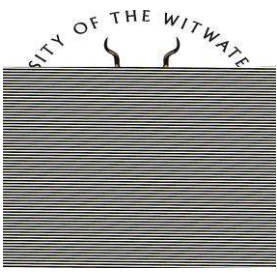
- Vocational and occupational programmes are provided in a range of institutions and 'one size fits all' does not apply, but there must be some rationale for categorising policy positions.
  - Large institutions and multi-programme providers like public FET colleges and large private providers are more amenable to periodic institutional audits, supplemented by visits at introduction of new programmes
  - Each programme should stipulate the expected qualifications of educators and instructors and emphasis to be put on the continuous development of their capacity
  - Single providers and workplace sites should have a simplified audit system verifying their capacity to provide currently and in the near future to avoid transient provision in the system



# Is quality in the eyes of the beholder?

## a. Quality of assessments:

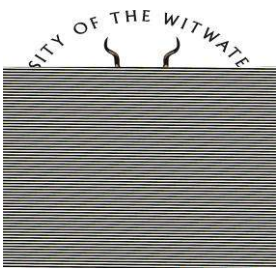
- Again, occupations should provide the organising frame for the conceptualisation of assessments than an economic sector
- General Vocational and the assessment of knowledge are best assessed through an examination model
- In occupational qualifications, it is best to get Community of Experts to contribute in the development of assessments in specific areas to ensure that the right competences are being assessed
- In order to be more responsive whilst avoiding the predictability of assessments, item banks of tests for both theory and practice in occupational qualifications are recommended



# Is quality in the eyes of the beholder?

## a. Assessment of quality in the system:

- An occupationally + experts driven system should lead to better insights in the performance of the system as a whole
- Although not recommended as a starting point, QA agencies should establish means to test the system performance as an additional measure in order to engender a competitive skills development system
- National and international skills competitions that are developing in the trades area are but one form of testing the system, but they test at only the high end of the system and ignore the average learner



## 9. Conclusion

- A complex relationship between educational attainments and labour market access
- The medicine should never have been about the development of new qualifications into perpetuity, but figuring out how to make this relationship work in different sectors and under different conditions in order to skill the nation and improve the economy.
- Quality assurance should be 'content and context specific' and aim at producing competent employees - not just to comply with the requirements of the quality agencies and their consultants