

**Report on indicators used by providers
in relation to EQAVET**

**EQAVET
IN PRACTICE**



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Preface

The Erasmus+ project “EQAVET in Practice” project started in September 2015. EQAVET as an EU toolbox aims to increase the transparency, consistency and transferability of VET providers across Europe. It provides a common reference framework at national level to VET providers to improve, monitor and evaluate their quality assurance policies and practices. What is actually hard to do for many of the providers is the interpretation of EQAVET’s criteria and descriptors and to relate it to the policy of their own institute. Therefore, additional action is needed and that is actually the objective area of the EQAVET in Practice project:

- To develop guidelines for the interpretation of EQAVET criteria to national framework at provider level,
- ... in a supporting web based environment
- ... making supportive use of some well-developed EU good practices.

The be able to develop these guidelines context research is necessary regarding the current use of EQAVET and of the relevant indicators. In addition, the required guidelines will be related to actually three good EU practices, which have already been developed and tested in former EU-projects:

- Peer Review,
- CQAF VET model
- Guidelines for the implementation of EQAVET in national QA policy.

This has consequences for the purpose of the supportive research. The research task is to report on usage of existing criteria descriptions and indicators in quality assurance at provider level in the participating countries as well as on the key qualities and usability of the selected good practices. Additionally, the research needs to address the guidelines that are going to be developed for managers and experts responsible for QA policy of the institutes, as well as teachers who need to be involved in the QA policy.

Research is done in the partner countries Greece (Dimitra ltd), Italy (Effebi Association and Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per il Veneto), Spain (IES Hermanos) and Sweden (Folkuniversitetet Uppsala) in the period of February till June 2016. Directives have been developed to standardize the research procedure as well as data processing. This report is the joint summary of the research done. Information that is more detailed can be found in the different country reports.

Introduction

Due to the nature of the project, the information needs to be collected at provider level: managers and/or staff of VET or of VET boards with a knowledge on QA (both IVET and CVET). This was done through face-to-face interviews or through group interviews. Thematically the research consisted of an inventory of information on descriptors and indicators used by providers in their own organisation to implement QA. The questionnaire covered to some extent the following issues:

- Inventory on meaning of “good quality of education” and on its conditions (what does one need to arrange for?)
- Inventory of current usage of heart of EQAVET (PDCA-cycle) / obstacles
- Inventory of main indicators used to assure for a good learning outcome (EQAVET and its relation with CQAF VET model themes and indicators)
- On peer review methodology as means to improve QA (thinking) in a VET organization / obstacles for its usage

Ideally, the research needed to cover between 15 to 30 respondents per partner country. Average duration of a face-to-face or telephone interview was estimated at 45 minutes. Response was stored in standard report templates, which assured for anonymous data processing.

During the different interviews, two different definitions of good quality of education have been used. The first definition is the one that is provided by the respondent him/herself. This definition was used to stimulate the respondent to talk on behalf of his/her own experiences and conceptions on quality of education.

The second definition is the standard definition which is also used by the European Commission in relation to quality assurance in education: “Quality of any educational institute depends on the capacity to achieve prior set targets”. This definition was used to have a focused talk from the same European perspective about the different indicators and criteria of EQAVET.

1. Respondents

The respondents have the following general characteristics:

Item:	Greece	Italy	Spain	Sweden
N of respondents	101	17	18	24
Role/position:				
Directors	14	8	2	10
QA staff	1	1		15
Teachers/ other	2	9	22	17
Years in this position:				
< 5	4	2		21
5-10	1	1		14
>10	12	15	24	7
Public funded		1	5	21
private	17	6		4
IVET (EU level 1 – 4):		12	24	
Higher Prof Education (5, 6, 7)		3		
AVET				25 (HVE) levels 5 and 6
Amount of staff:				
<25	14	6		10
25 – 49	1	1		15
50 – 299	2	10		
300>		1		
Amount of students at institute:	20 – 3,500	150-15,000	App 1,000	App 500
Areas of education (technical, economics etc.)	All sectors	Healthcare, ICT, Technical, Multi media, Ec and admin, Tourism, food and wine, lyceum, social ser., Environment, social Innovation; disabilities, Innovation for growth in the business and cultural sector; promotion of transversal skills	45% Comp / Info 20% Mechanics 30% other	Ec. and admin Technical Health care

The 17 Greek respondents ranged from directors, training managers to quality assurance managers. Their everyday tasks and responsibilities include the monitoring and evaluation of training program's effectiveness, success as well as a keen understanding of training trends, developments and best practices. All respondents had overall responsibility for the structure and quality of training in the organisation. The respondents in general are well experienced and cover all sectors of education. The institutions was in general relative small.

In Italy, the group of respondents of Veneto Region (total amount of 10) has been chosen among the school staff of some upper secondary institutes located in the different areas of the region. The schools located in Treviso city centre and the neighbouring districts are technical and vocational upper secondary schools while the other two located in the

mountain area offer different types of study courses (lyceum, technical and vocational). In the west area (Verona) it was decided to submit the interview to a school principal and several teachers responsible for quality working in a lyceum. The respondents have a considerable experience in the various quality control methods (ISO, CAF, etc.) and have participated to the recent activities coordinated by the Ministry of Education and USRV.

The second group of respondents is from Lazio and Lombardy Regions region (total amount of eight) and has been chosen among different types of organizations. They are two private VET Organizations, a management-consulting firm, a private telematics University, a private school, a small and medium enterprise, a no-profit organisation and a public high school.

In Spain 24 interviews have been taken from five different public VET schools with an average of 1000 students. All of them are experienced teachers with more than 10 years of experience in the current post. Most of the interviewed are VET teachers of which two are VET school principals.

In Sweden, the 42 respondents originated from HVE and represented 25 mostly public institutes with less than 50 staff. Respondents were evenly spread over the different staff levels: managers, administrators as well as teachers. They vary in range of experience due to funding mechanism of HVE.

Conclusion

The research in partner countries covers a wide range of education. Almost all areas of education as well as levels have been addressed for in the research. The scale of the involved institutes is different varying from rather small institutes in Sweden to very big institutes in Italy. The description presented generate a rather elaborate picture of the way EQAVET is shaped at institute's level and what the main challenges are for education.

The differences both at provider and at country level give us an excellent overview of the wide range of practices in Europe. We mainly search for similarities more than differences, and will in the following chapters give an overview of both. Readers who want a more detailed insight in the answers from one or more of the countries are recommended to read the country reports.

2. Good quality of education: what does it mean?

Respondents have been asked to elaborate on the issue of good quality of education and on how one is able to conclude that good quality of education has been offered. This section of then report covers the answers of the partner respondents on what good quality means for them, what education they are really proud on, whether indicators have been used and the respondents examples of good practice in which the criteria are reflected and clearly respected. These different issues will be reported upon in the four different paragraphs of this chapter.

2.1 Respondent's definition of good quality of education

In this section, the outcomes are presented of the respondents answers on their ideas regarding the definition of quality in education.

According to the Greek respondents, defining quality means developing standards of VET quality for:

- Input (e.g. curricula, materials, trainers, training of teachers/trainers, equipment, infrastructures);
- processes (e.g. how access to VET is promoted);
- outcomes (e.g. how VET responds to the changing demands of the labour market).

Quality education should not be regarded as a process of consumption, but as a process of interaction between teachers and students. Education must aim at giving the students opportunities for personal development and confidence to adapt to new situations as well as change these whenever necessary. Quality education is the education that best fits the present and future needs of the particular learners.

According to Italian respondents' good quality of education means:

- central role of all members of the school community: students, teachers, administrative, technicians, employees, parents
- growth of the person in autonomy
- achievement of planned objectives with adequate results that meet the requests, through the optimal use of all resources available
- success of the students for the harmonious development of their personalities aimed at training future citizens and workers/professionals of the community (acquisition of knowledge, competences, maturity and sense of responsibility, strengthening of attitudes)
- central role of the individual and fulfillment of his/her educational needs with a clear definition of objectives; strategic planning to achieve them; monitoring
- let the student find a training institute that offers well-defined objectives, effective implementation tools and transparent assessment methods
- a mix of qualified and professional teachers, school organization and users' motivation.

Most of the Italian respondents consider training objectives as a tool to increase and upgrade the knowledge and skills of beneficiaries and stakeholders, with the ultimate aim to facilitate employability and access the labour market, promoting at the same time the growth of the organizations and local communities.

The key elements that define the “good quality in education” must take into account several factors, such as the monitoring of training paths and educational resources’ planning processes; the correspondence between educational objectives and learners expectations coming from the new knowledge and/or skills acquired; the achievement of the predetermined strategic goals.

According to the Spanish respondents, there is a big difference between the world of education and the world of training regarding their governance, funding and accountability as well as the prevailing standards, expectations and learning progress. In both worlds is a growing tendency to adopt quality focused VET-strategies that rely on strong relationships with stakeholders. In general, good education is considered to be: the ability to form high qualified professionals as well as people with career adaptabilities and coping strategies to deal with challenges in life and work. To be able to do this it is required:

1. Well trained teachers (professional skills, teaching skills, work experience as well as put into practice life-long learning to stay professional);
2. A realistic and continuously updated curriculum adjusted to business needs, as a result of continuous collaboration between education and businesses;
3. Appropriate equipped and updated training materials in the institutes;
4. Realistic size of students / classes to do so; as well as an appropriate training / teaching climate to stimulate student’s motivation.

Swedish respondents defined good quality of education as follows:

1. A good quality vocational education is an education, which give qualification to students to acquire a job within the sector for which they have been educated.
2. A good quality education is one that ensures that the content of the VET programs are continuously responds to the needs of working life
3. The training should convey the skills required to perform qualified tasks in the workplace. Good quality VET Education is characterized by the strong work related as well as theoretical bases. Good quality VET education should therefore be based on the knowledge generated in the production of goods and services, and in science. Training should be designed in such a way that a high quality and occupational relevance is achieved. Employability rate is one of the main dominant indicators for this (75-80% of AVET students have a relevant job after 3 months) and is directly related to funding.

Summary

The common idea that quality in education is a concept which is rapidly evolving over time, but also has different emphasis according to different institutes, education sectors, and different players in the education system – student, teachers, policymakers, the business community etc.

But all the feedback indicated that apart from differences there is a big area of similarities. The main common elements are:

- Employability, or more general deliver your educational objectives. In all countries it is also indicated that stakeholders play an important role in establishing whether this has been achieved
- A periodically updated curriculum in line with the above requirements
- Collaboration between education and the world of labour
- Making students competent in skills and competences required for future demands (of the society as well as world of labour); satisfied students
- Organising the proper environment to be able to deliver good education meaning not only training materials and class room equipment but more importantly up to date and motivated teachers

2.2 Respondent's decisive criteria for good quality of education

Respondents have been asked to indicate according to them what is good education, and which criteria assure for good education.

In a general sense, respondents in Greece perceive quality as a set of activities of the organisation are oriented towards the fulfilment of requirements of the customer/student. The activity of a VET organisation oriented towards the attainment of the basic objectives in the educational process. Its main subjects are learners (students) and the teaching staff (teachers). The process should be properly organised, taking into consideration such aspects as inter alia curricula development, teaching methods, principles of assessment, necessary equipment (schools' material resources) and, consequently, it should lead to the achievement of learning outcomes by students and their validation.

To sum up the Greek responses of the providers, the following criteria were selected as the most important ones when talking about good quality:

- curricula are prepared taking into consideration the expectations of employers and the development of key competencies of students/course participants;
- didactic materials developed, taking into consideration inter alia solutions in the field of new techniques and technologies, which enable the achievement of the projected learning outcomes;
- training is performed by highly qualified and carefully chosen trainers;
- the needs regarding the development of professional qualifications of teachers, resulting from the necessity of introducing changes into the educational process connected with the technical and technological progress, are identified;
- the educational offer is prepared with participation of employers, thereby ensuring that graduates will find their place on the labour market;
- school facilities are provided with equipment guaranteeing the high quality of vocational education and the development of students' interest;
- Classes are formed according to students' needs.

Oddly, implementation of an internal quality management system by VET providers was not mentioned as a crucial issue to improve quality at their level.

The Italian respondents listed 17 criteria as the most important ones for good quality of education:

1. The presence of a shared strategy and planning is the most important criterion for good quality of education. The two actions - identification of a shared strategy and its planning - require knowing how to integrate, from one hand the user's needs and expectations and on the other, the development trends by foreseeing business needs

- and innovations. The framework of objectives must be clear and unequivocal, so that the choices can be consistent with the real needs and shared.
2. The recognition of learning outcomes needs appropriate tools so that they can be compared with stable standards and possible improvements can be surveyed in the course of time: improvement in students' performance certified by international, national, regional and school assessment methods, rate of early school leaving, the results of national standardized tests (INVALSI)
 3. A teaching staff with specific competences, the importance of a constant updating, the sharing of good practices, the teamwork and the ability to interact with stakeholders, since they are the key factor for improving education and training students
 4. The ability to build and create personalized learning pathways according to students' needs
 5. The leadership by the school principal means promoting the dialogue based on listening and a jointly responsible participation based on the valorisation of people. The guide of the community determines the relational climate and therefore the effectiveness of actions.
 6. Planning and organisation of activities: defining programs of activities that take into account the beneficiaries and the context in which they operate through proper methods and tools;
 7. Transparent assessment methods and closely related to planned goals
 8. Financial resources must be invested in a targeted manner according to identified priorities
 9. The central role of the learner is fundamental in all types of school and especially in vocational upper secondary schools
 10. The flexibility meant as the willingness to change following the environment evolution, the innovations, and the emerging demand. Flexibility is crucial to offer a learning-based process
 11. The improvement of the education and training that can offer young people many opportunities allowing them to discover and develop the attitudes and the competences achieved in the not traditionally disciplinary fields.
 12. The dissemination of best solutions and effective practices
 13. The balance between the theoretical and practical aspects of education
 14. The acquisition of key competencies – active citizenship (in order to reduce also the disciplinary measures in vocational upper education).
 15. The precise identification of implementation tools that enable to fully meet user's expectations. Part being evaluation of these tools for continuous update and improvement
 16. The responsibility and ethics are very important in the school community in order to ensure high quality standards

17. Transparent assessment and evaluation of results and impact, and the reporting to show the community and stakeholders the appropriate use of all types of resources, to ensure continuous focus on reprogramming and update to meet needs as one of the main purposes of QA.

The Spanish respondents listed 11 criteria, which according to them are decisive for good quality of education. These indicators are:

1. The teaching and learning process are regularly reviewed and adapted to the real needs;
2. Analysis of results which generates improvement proposals
3. Clear design of career learning tracks during internships
4. Teaching is focussed on practical development of labour market requirements
5. Evaluation of teaching process is done to improve initial planning
6. Results of evaluation are made public
7. Use of a QA system with measurable indicators
8. Curriculum is designed to meet training demands of businesses
9. Technology and equipment in school parallels the world of businesses
10. Clear assessment criteria and process for the students;
11. Processes check at all levels of the organisation

The Spanish responses closely resemble the indicators, which are also in use in the CQAF VET provider model describing content and teaching methods as well as benefits of the learner in a process of continuous evaluation and involvement of students, staff, business and other relevant stakeholders.

The quality debate in Sweden concerns itself not only with the quality of vocational training but also with its broader social implications, and with such general objectives as creativity. The involvement of participants and other stakeholders is considered crucial (in the planning, the content as well as in evaluating education), as is the use of different kinds of evaluations, both qualitative and quantitative approaches (satisfaction scores, employment rates), and the wish for useful results for developers, planners and decision-makers.

Additionally quality of education according to the Swedish respondents the quality of education will benefit of: attention for vocational guidance; support for work experience and consideration of the needs of people with disabilities (including 'vocational rehabilitation')

Summary

Outcomes of the partner research are different in the detail but are well in line with each other if one considers at the bigger picture. Aspects like finances are taken out of this listing since they are national and regional conditions, which can hardly be influenced by the

educational institute itself. To offer good quality of education the respondents in the different countries agree on the following aspects:

- Arrange for continuous review, evaluation with involvement of all the relevant stakeholders
- Arrange for a continuous process of updating and adaption to meet labour market needs, meaning also arranging for a process through which education can collect this type of information in an easy way
- Create a culture of quality throughout the organisation to involve teachers and teaching staff in the process of reviewing and continuous improvement of materials as well as didactical approaches
- Leadership as a major facilitator for creating a culture of quality
- Develop a learning environment which parallels the actual vocational environment
- Arrange for a focus on learning outcomes with measurable indicators
- Arrange for more personalised pathways of education

2.3 Existing measurements (indicators) of quality

Measuring quality consists of quantifying the current level of VET performance against expected standards. In addition, the collection, sharing and use of data on quality among the relevant stakeholders constitutes one of the key principles of VET policy alignment, i.e. the use of evidence by policy makers and key stakeholders (e.g. VET providers, employers, trainers and trainees) at every decision point. Accordingly, measuring quality leads directly to the identification of areas for improvement. This paragraph summarises the partner findings regarding the indicators that are most common in use currently.

In summary the Greek respondents indicated that in recent years there has been an increased interest in evidence-based policy making in VET and in the use of valid and robust evaluation and monitoring instruments and indicators. The main indicators mentioned by the respondents are the following:

- The measurement of student satisfaction by a questionnaire as a means to help institutes to pinpoint their strengths and identify areas for improvement.
- Evaluation of professional qualifications and competencies of trainers, performance of entrusted tasks and performance in general is assessed by the students
- Indicators of labour market performance of vocational graduates - the traditional standards by which the effectiveness of vocational education and employment training have been measured - include job placement, and duration of employment and unemployment. (Note: most providers point out that economic and personal factors are beyond the control of the vocational education system although they also determine the employment of students);

- Percentage of qualifications recognition in the labour market
- Percentage of participation of vulnerable groups

In the interviews with Italian respondents, 11 important indicators were mentioned. The answers of the respondents are presented in the table below:

	Indicator:	Way of measurement:	Impact on which stakeholders?
1	Monitoring tools	<p>Organisation of focus-groups; reports of monitoring meetings</p> <p>The use of quality criteria can enable the continuous development and the process doesn't stop even if people and external variables change. Therefore it is necessary to invest on quality assurance mechanisms.</p>	<p>Internal staff: impact on daily activities and procedures implemented; final users: satisfaction or dissatisfaction with regard to the expected result and perception of the service; local companies and stakeholders: know business needs</p>
2	Assessment tools	<p>Interviews with parents; interviews with students and teachers; dialogue among school actors; satisfaction questionnaires</p>	<p>Families since the impact is positive and the number of students is always the same during the years; the school board which encourages the application of quality measurement indicators; target groups, trainers who should continuously update</p>
3	Final results of students' learning pathway	<p>Monitoring of students attendance; students performance</p>	<p>Students, teachers and families.</p> <p>Positive impact: increase of the rate of students passing to the next school year; reduction of the rate of suspended students; valorisation of WBL; assessment of key competences for active citizenship; improvement of students performance</p>
4	Periodical reports	<p>Monitoring of reports submitted to class boards and increase of assessment results in some subjects.</p>	<p>Students and teachers responsible for extra-educational activities</p>

		A methodology targeted to identify the best students involved in the extra-educational activities offered by the school. The students will be recommended to the class board in order to receive a concrete recognition.	
5	Final outcomes: outcomes of Invalsi – National Institute for the evaluation of the education system – tests; Outcomes of PISA (Ocse) tests; Eduscopio national survey on post diploma choices.	Analysis of data archives on the results of the Liceo.	Discussion and comparison of results for improvement.
6	Use of UNI ISO 9001:2008 on Quality Management System.	Planning and development review, verification and validation, design and development; Internal Audit; Monitoring and measurement of processes and products; Data analysis; Implementation of UNI ISO 9001:2008 regulation on quality management.	Internal and external stakeholders; Citizens (adults and children, the citizens of tomorrow); Local authorities; Companies and economic stakeholders; International organizations.
7	Customer satisfaction on all areas covered by the accreditation of training institutions procedures.	Group meetings to define the questionnaire, to test the produced format with different targets, to review and approve the format.	Direct beneficiaries (participants); trainers and consultants (constant adaptation and maintaining of professional and educational skills), internal staff (projects and supply services offices).
8	Context indicator (percentage of participants in professional education, belonging to the category of project and educational success rate of students affected by the action).	Collection of opinions of learners, of their families and their teachers; Comparative analysis of the percentage of school dropout and early school leaving.	Significant impact on stakeholders related to the institutional system and in particular on existing and potential families and on existing and potential learners and on teaching staff.
9	Participants satisfaction.	Evaluation of the course venue, the ICT tools, the teaching materials, the teacher preparation, his/her ability to interact, etc.	Stakeholders involved are generally the same external participants

			in training courses: learners.
10	Evaluation of a training project's impact.	Administration of two questionnaires, one at the end of the training activities and one after a few months of their conclusion.	Those to whom the questionnaire was administered: the learners.
11	Number of enrolment in training courses.	Analysis of applications for admission.	Lazio region, Città metropolitana di Roma, Third Sector.

In the interviews with Spanish respondents eight important indicators were mentioned. The answers of the respondents are presented in the table below:

	Indicator:	Way of measurement:	Impact on which stakeholders?
1	Company degree of satisfaction with the student's professional training	Company questionnaire about the student 's on-the job-training	Teachers and board of education
2	Student' satisfaction about the training received one 5year after finishing his vocational training	Company questionnaire about the student 's on-the-job-training	Teachers, students and companies
3	Percent of Students that get the qualification certificate	Statistics	Companies and board of education
	Percentage of students that join up to the labour market (employability)	Statistics	Companies and board of education
5	Student's satisfaction about the training received	Company questionnaire about the student 's on-the-job-training	Teachers and companies
6	Student's satisfaction about the internship in the companies	Company questionnaire about the student 's on-the-job-training	Teachers and companies
	Percentage of students promoted	Statistics	Board of education & teachers
8	Percentage of students leaving school before obtaining the qualification certificate	Statistics	Teachers Companies , teachers and board of education

The dominant indicators used in Sweden are presented in the table below:

	N- times mentioned	Short description	Why chosen by respondents?
EQAVET criteria 1	More than 50 times	Employability	Demand by national agency for funding
EQAVET criteria 2	30-40 times	Satisfaction by employers and students	Demand by national agency for funding
EQAVET criteria 3	20-30 times	Approved by agency	For defining that they meet the Quality criteria by national agency

EQAVET criteria 4	20-25 times	The view of mentor during WBL	If the student acquired necessary qualification during training
EQAVET criteria 5	20-25	Level of interest shown by companies	Showing the demand by labour market for the training

Summary

The answers on the question regarding indicators used to measure quality has been answered from sometimes different perspectives. In Sweden, the answers relate to EQAVET indicators, which will be presented in the next chapter. It shows that the Swedish VET-providers mainly focus on the five of the EQAVET indicators. The respondents of the other countries focused on what general indicators institutes use, not being particularly the EQAVET ones. The following indicators have been mentioned in all partner countries:

Indicator most often mentioned by the respondents from Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden	Links to indicator of EQAVET	Link to themes of CQAF VET
Student satisfaction	Q5	2.1
Student satisfaction of WBL	Q6	1.4; 3.3
Promotion / completion rate	Q4	2.1
Competence of teachers	Q2	2.3
Employability, interest of employers	Q7	1.1; 1.4
Recognition of qualifications in labour market	Q9	3.4
Participation of vulnerable groups	Q8	1.3;3.1

The table shows the relationship between the indicators mentioned and the both EQAVET as well as CQAF VET indicators.

2.4 Respondents example of good practice in which these criteria are reflected / clearly respected

Each partner has selected one example of good practice and described it in detail including argumentation for why it is a good practice. The good practices are presented in the table below.

Good practice	Title:	Main type of Indicators	How was effect established?
GR	Alumni mentoring scheme	Students satisfaction rate	Creation of relationships between students and alumni
Italy	“Osservatorio Galilei” Internal informal Bulletin of the school community	a) Number of internal bulletins issued b) Amount of positive events to be published Amount of complaints about events not selected for publication	Whoever had been the protagonist of a positive event or had promoted it could ask that it would be published on the bulletin. The internal journal “Osservatorio Galilei”, giving voice to the positive aspects, has praised many people, stimulating their need to achieve more positive results. The activity has promoted a positive sense of community participation and an incentive to improve it in a responsible way.
Italy	Vocational high school “Alfred Nobel” - Rome. School project: "sports and education: no competition”	Individuals belonging to the targeted categories participating in the educational and vocational training activities and success rate.	Through the measurement of the increased number of professional sport students registered in the institute, (eg. In the last two years it increased from 1% to 10%).
Spain	Former students computerised database	Number of former students with job; N of students and employers who use data base	Statistics of database; Questionnaire
Sweden	Work Based Learning	Student and employer satisfaction rate; Employability	Job profile based on employers engagement

For a more detailed description of the good practices in this table, see annexes.

The Greek respondents appointed good practices covered initiatives which allow to monitor success in terms of employment, activities which enhance transparency of regional labour market as well as applying for ISO 9001 certificate. The alumni mentor scheme was selected as best good practices for its focus is on learner satisfaction and the opportunity to better inform and support.

The Italian respondents have provided for different types of good practices covering various areas of the school life. Regarding the indicators selected, it was not clear if they were established at the beginning. It was however possible to measure the impact and the effects in the different phases. Some good practices have been recently implemented; others have been running for few years. In addition to the best practice chosen as the most illustrative one, we would like also to highlight other two best practices: one dealing with the valorisation of teachers' merit, because it introduces a method to support a problematic step in the Italian education system, namely the importance of the teaching staff assessment and the possible economic bonus given to those who are more worthy according to a committee decision. The second one is improvement of management time / processes, as it introduces the improvement of the management processes that entails the resulting saving of materials and work by the management staff.

The Spanish respondents have provided for a set of nine different good practices. Main flaw however has been the fact that, although quality was ensured for, in most cases the indicators were not established at the beginning and effects have not been established accordingly. Most of the described good practices have been used to achieve good results in the management and implementation of procedures as well as in the pursuit of meeting the needs of the students and to overcome their problems. Some of them are new initiatives and innovations, others now have been running for years. All share the enhanced employability of the students involved. None of them has used a prior established set of indicators since in general there yet is not an established culture of quality in Spanish Education.

According to the Swedish interviewees, the core of the VET program is WBL, as a method to verify learned and acquired qualification and as a method for being job-ready. The reason behind it is that, the very heart of AVE reform is the strong emphasis on learning at work. The decision that one-third of each AVE programme is to be dedicated to work-based learning was made in order to ensure that programmes are both practical, as well as based on theoretical knowledge. This means that the courses are not organised as a traditional traineeship period, but rather revolve around work-based learning and problem solving in an overall educational context. One requirement of the course providers is that the workplace itself be organised to make learning possible. Due to that, WBL arrangements are considered being a Swedish best good practice.

2.5 Conclusion

The answers of the partners - on what good quality means for them, what education they are really proud on, whether indicators have been used and the respondents examples of good practice in which the criteria are reflected and clearly respected – show both a number of similarities and some specific focus areas for the individual countries.

The main common elements in defining good quality of education are:

- Employability,

- Updated curriculum
- Collaboration between education and the world of labour
- Students prepared for the future
- Training materials, class room equipment and motivated teachers

These elements are in most countries also included in the presentation of the criteria for good quality of education, where the different countries agree on the following:

- Continuous review, evaluation with involvement of all the relevant stakeholders
- Continuous process of updating and adaption to meet labour market needs
- Create a culture of quality throughout the organisation
- Leadership is a major facilitator for creating a culture of quality
- Develop a learning environment which parallels the actual vocational environment
- Focus on learning outcomes with measurable indicators
- Personalised pathways of education

In general are the list of criteria for good quality of education long and very detailed for each partner and country, and with a high degree of similarity among the criteria.

It is interesting that implementation of an internal quality management system by VET providers was NOT mentioned as a crucial issue to improve quality at their level.

The answers on the question regarding indicators used to measure quality has been answered from partly different perspectives. In Sweden, the answers relate to EQAVET indicators, where the respondents of the other countries focused on what general indicators institutes use, not being particularly the EQAVET ones.

The answers on measuring quality either directly or by the use of indicators resulted in most countries in very long and detailed lists, like in Italy where they mention 11 indicators and in Spain where eight indicators are presented. The following indicators have been mentioned in all partner countries:

Indicator most often mentioned by the respondents from Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden	Links to indicator of EQAVET	Link to themes of CQAF VET
Student satisfaction	Q5	2.1
Student satisfaction of WBL	Q6	1.4; 3.3
Promotion / completion rate	Q4	2.1
Competence of teachers	Q2	2.3
Employability, interest of employers	Q7	1.1; 1.4
Recognition of qualifications in labour market	Q9	3.4
Participation of vulnerable groups	Q8	1.3;3.1

It is interesting that most countries do NOT mention the EQAVET indicators, even if many of the used indicators at provider level are similar to the EQAVET quality indicators. This indicates for us, that the knowledge and use of EQAVET-indicators are limited at provider level in many countries.

Each partner has selected one example of good practice and described it in detail including argumentation for why it is a good practice. The main type of indicators used are ranging from students satisfaction rate in Greece, number of internal positive bulletins issued and the number of professional sports students registered in an institute in Italy, number of former students with job in Spain and finally student and employer satisfaction rate and employability in Sweden.

3 EQAVET criteria/descriptors in use

This section of the report covers the answers on two aspects of EQAVET: the use and the completion of a cycle of continuous improvement when arraigning for activities to improve the quality of education, as well as in the use of the EQAVET- quality criteria and descriptors in the different stages of the improvement cycle.

3.1 Effective use of the EQAVET cycle

Respondents have been informed on the European policy regarding the quality of education and on the European definition of quality. To support throughout Europe a common idea regarding national and institute development of quality the Commission has developed a set of indicators and descriptors. The overall improvement process is guided by the concept of continuous evaluation and improvement (rather similar to a PDCA cycle). Respondents were asked to reflect on the institute capacity to address improvement by this overall process and systematic procedure of planning, implementation, evaluation and review of actions taken, and to indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 the efforts of the institute to maintain this process focus consistently. The results are presented in the table below.

Country	Average score current use of PDCA type of process on a scale from 1 to 10	Remarks
Greece	6.3	Further adaptation of indicators and descriptors as well as promotion of EQAVET needed
Italy	6	Need to implement and combine different quality systems, they are quite familiar with all the quality cycle phases as with EQAVET descriptors and indicators and their application
Spain	6	Differences between EQAVET and actions at provider level; challenge to focus on the need to continuously look for improvement
Sweden	--	Question seemed unclear

In general, Greek VET providers often go through an accreditation and external and/or internal reviews process, but widespread use of the EQAVET cycle is not common. This shows that there is still room for improvement in reaching the VET provider level. In that sense the EQAVET projects, such as EQAVET in Practice, could serve as good practices.

The Italian respondents said that to achieve quality, planning must be made by starting from students' needs, granting each and all real learning opportunities. To achieve this, planning of learning activities should start from clearly described goals as far as outcomes are concerned, a compliance standard should be set for each expected outcome, and the ways, the available resources, the responsibilities, times, control methods, testing times and

evaluation criteria through which to achieve these results should be defined. This planning activity should include Departments and teaching teams. The RAV (Annual Report of Evaluation) and the PdM (Improvement Plan) have been recently introduced. The experiences developed through the years are referred to different models of quality. ISO is the most important world organisation for the definition of technical standards. A different model (Common Assessment Framework) has been introduced for the Public Administration, based on self-assessment aimed at improvement. The EFMQ (European Framework Management Quality) is another model of self-assessment. Now, the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR) has introduced a common model, divided into three phases: RAV, PdM and finally the social balance sheet. This experience is now being carried out in its first two phases. EQAVET, instead, is little known even though its cycle has a clear meaning. Only one school has shown to be implementing all four phases, especially revision for improvement, while most schools stop at the first two: planning and implementation.

In Lazio and Lombardy Regions, quite all the respondents are familiar with the PDCA cycle: they focus most on the planning and evaluation phases. They are less familiar with EQAVET descriptors and indicators; they have limited awareness of their contents and of concrete implementation opportunities.

The Spanish respondents indicated that a well-run PDCA approach on analysis of current situation and measures to be taken is essential for quality. Essentially one needs to identify what needs to be improved; develop hypotheses on which changes might improve quality; implement the changes to see whether they actually generate improvement; evaluate the results of the implementation exercise; and finally review the existing situation in the light of lessons learned. The challenge is to see Quality not as an end in itself but rather is something that needs to be developed, nurtured and sustained over time through continuous assessment. A main benefit expressed in the process behind EQAVET. Spanish policy makers and VET teachers face several challenges in implementing high-quality VET provision, including the significant amount of knowledge and skills required, the large number of steps that need to be taken, and the wide variety of contexts in which VET provision needs to be implemented. These challenges may result in a large gap between the decision makers and policy developers at national level and teachers at local level.

Swedish feedback indicated a misconception of the interview question. In general, one can say that most AVET providers indicate that the PDCA cycle is not of importance by itself. For providers there are only relevant indicators, which are prescribed by the YH body. The reason behind a is the fact that HVE has one major goal, to resolve the bottle neck in the labour market regarding shortage of needed skills by employers. It is not directed to decrease the unemployment or to provide employment to a specific group among unemployed. Consequently, the focus of providers will be those areas of importance for National Agency for Higher VET, mainly needs in the labour market, satisfaction by students and employers and employability rate after graduation.

The Swedish respondents focus mainly on the quality requirements set by the authorities, where most of the respondents from Greece, Italy and Spain use a wider perspective and have views on the definition of further relevant quality criteria and indicators.

Conclusion

In summary in the partner countries, the attention for the EQAVET continuous improvement cycle is perceived as having great importance, but instead receives a “just sufficient” score for its actual consequent usage. There is much room for improvement in this area. Partners refer to barriers in terms of differences in constraint coming from different quality models, the different appeals coming from national boards or authorities, the related bureaucracy as well as the need for a culture of quality, which is essential for the promotion of continuous improvement of education.

3.2 Use of EQAVET quality criteria/descriptors

The tables below presents the findings regarding the current usage of the different EQAVET indicators and descriptors. The figures presented in the tables give a very different picture of the realities than what we see in many of the other answers. We present the figures in order to show the methodological challenges in the questions selected and the answers from the interviews.

Planning descriptors	% of use:			
	Gr	Italy	Spain	Sweden
Studies on process and product.	95%	100%	63%	
Focus on local needs and value added to the customer	100%	100%	46%	100%
Transparency in the intake (criteria)	100%	100%	75%	
Design of new courses adapted to market needs	100%	40%	17%	100%
Plan the internal resources eg. Teachers	100%	100%	88%	

The figures presented in the table indicate a very high rate of use among most of the responding providers, with Spain showing the lowest usage of the EQAVET planning descriptors.

	% of usage			
Implementation descriptors	Greece	Italy	Spain	Sweden
Run courses according to syllabus.	100%	100%	92%	100%
Have internal stand. procedures for QA	71%	60%	67%	
Invest time and resources	100%	100%	34%	
Secure internal cooperation.	100%	90%	71%	

The figures presented in the table indicate a very high rate of use among most of the responding providers, with Spain showing the lowest usage of the EQAVET planning descriptors.

	% of usage			
Evaluation descriptors	Greece	Italy	Spain	Sweden
Be willing to take criticism from both external and internal stakeholders	100%	100%	92%	100%
Assess the activities and take the time for analysis	100%	100%	88%	
Involve stakeholders in the analysis	100%	40%	79%	100%
Have regular meetings and evaluations	100%	50%	92%	100%

The figures presented in the table indicate a very high rate of use among all of the responding providers.

	% of usage			
Review descriptors	Greece	Italy	Spain	Sweden
Use the analysis and facts.	100%	100%	88%	
Secure the follow-up.	100%	80%	83%	
Give feedback to students and all stakeholders	100%	80%	92%	100%

The figures presented in the table indicate a very high rate of use among all of the responding providers.

Actors / stakeholders descriptors	% of usage			
	Greece	Italy	Spain	Sweden
Listen to the market needs and meet the professionals here	100%	50%	67%	100%
Listen to the students and support both strong students and students with personal problems	91%	80%	96%	
Educate trainers even more	76%	60%	46%	
Take all stakeholders seriously and involve them	100%	70%	67%	100%

The figures presented in the table indicate some variation of use of the actors/stakeholders descriptors among all of the responding providers.

All Greek respondents claim to strongly use all descriptors in all phases of the quality cycle. However, that is the case when someone does not want to give away an institute's weakness. Despite the fact that the scores are high, the truth is somewhere in between. All Greek providers perform planning activities such as the design of new courses adapted to the market needs, implement activities such as courses running according to syllabus and collect data to improve effectiveness and efficiency of their systems and have devised for this appropriate data collection methodologies e.g. questionnaires and indicators/metrics. However, this does not automatically mean that processes are regularly reviewed and that action plans for change are devised, as the survey showed that only a few carry out regular reviews and devise action plans. Lastly, none of the institutes publish information on the outcomes of the evaluations. This is also reflected in the rather low score regarding the use of PDCA types of processes.

The Italian respondents show to make use of all planning descriptors (studies on process and product, focus on local needs and value added to the customer, transparency in the intake (criteria), plan the internal resources eg. Teachers); regarding implementation descriptors, all respondents use run courses according to syllabus; invest time and resources; secure internal cooperation. Only around 50% use "Have internal standardized procedures for QA". Around 70% "Run courses according to syllabus" and around 60% use "Have internal standardized procedures for QA". All respondents use the following evaluation descriptors: be willing to take criticism from both external and internal stakeholders; assess the activities and take the time for analysis. Only 50% of respondents use: involve stakeholders in the analysis, have

regular meetings and evaluations. The percentages are also good with regard to the use of the review descriptors whereas the situation is not so uniform concerning actors/stakeholders descriptors.

The Spanish respondents indicate that the cycle itself is perceived as valuable and essential. At the level of descriptors, EQAVET needs more promotion, explanation as well as support to improve implementation. The descriptor, which was considered most appealing by respondents, is the descriptor referring to training of teachers. It was indicated that some EQAVET descriptors are not included in current QA frameworks used by some providers, and vice versa EQAVET also misses aspects (adequacy of equipment, student feedback, quality of information and guidance f.e.). Responses indicate that EQAVET requires more detailed explanation as well as further promotion.

The Swedish scores were incomplete and could not be processed in the above table. Main requirements of YH are presented since they reflect the processes of individual providers they need to comply to. The cycle is not perceived as essential in the current situation since the national requirements are considered dominant and providers are not required to do something extra.

3.3 Conclusion

The respondents indicate – on a scale from 1 to 10 – that the efforts of their institutions average around 6 in relation to the use of a PDCA type of quality process. The PDCA cycle are similar to the basic thinking in EQAVET.

EQAVET is in general little known among the respondents even though its cycle has a clear meaning. Only few schools has shown to be implementing all four phases, especially revision for improvement, while most schools stop at the first two: planning and implementation.

The challenge is to see Quality not as an end in itself but rather is something that needs to be developed, nurtured and sustained over time through continuous assessment. A main benefit expressed in the process behind EQAVET. The significant amount of knowledge and skills required, the large number of steps that need to be taken, and the wide variety of contexts in which VET provision needs to be implemented are the main challenges and may result in a large gap between the decision makers and policy developers at national level and teachers at local level.

The Swedish respondents focus mainly on the quality requirements set by the authorities, where most of the respondents from Greece, Italy and Spain use a wider perspective and have views on the definition of further relevant quality criteria and indicators.

In summary in the partner countries, the attention for the EQAVET continuous improvement cycle is perceived as having great importance, but instead receives a “just sufficient” score for its actual consequent usage. There is much room for improvement in this area. Partners refer

to barriers in terms of differences in constraint coming from different quality models, the different appeals coming from national boards or authorities, the related bureaucracy as well as the need for a culture of quality, which is essential for the promotion of continuous improvement of education.

This shows that there is still room for improvement in reaching the VET provider level. In that sense the EQAVET projects, such as EQAVET in Practice, could serve as good practices.

The findings regarding the current usage of the different EQAVET indicators and descriptors give a very different picture of the realities than what we see in many of the other answers. We present the figures in order to show the methodological challenges in the questions selected and the answers from the interviews.

The respondents' answers indicate a very high rate of use of the EQAVET descriptors among most of the responding providers, especially regarding the planning, implementation and review phases.

The respondents' use of the descriptors for evaluation and actors/stakeholders differ between the different countries, but again here with a high degree of usage of the EQAVET descriptors.

The Spanish respondents indicate that the cycle itself is perceived as valuable and essential. At the level of descriptors, EQAVET needs more promotion, explanation as well as support to improve implementation. The descriptor which was considered most appealing by respondents' is the descriptor referring to training of teachers. It was indicated that some EQAVET descriptors are not included in current QA frameworks used by some providers, and vice versa, EQAVET also misses aspects (adequacy of equipment, student feedback, quality of information and guidance f.e.). Responses indicate that EQAVET requires more detailed explanation as well as further promotion.

4. Main challenges regarding improvement of the quality of education

This section of the report covers the answers of the respondents on the main challenges they see regarding further improvement of the quality of education. Since earlier research (see: EU PEN project 2015) as already indicated that within the teaching institutes there are at least two different realities when it comes to the issue of quality in education: the reality of the manager and the reality of the teacher. For quality improvement the involvement and commitment of teachers becomes of utmost importance. Therefore, the interviews also addressed the issue of how to increase the involvement of teachers as a way to establish a culture of quality.

4.1 Main challenges and support needed

According to the Greek respondents, the main challenges are the following:

- Developing certified training programs in correspondence with certified professional specializations and horizontal knowledge and skills
- Developing appropriate labour market skills sets
- Entrance in the labour market
- Combating unemployment

In Greece, the business sector still puts its faith in certificated qualifications and expects the formal system of education and training to bridge the gap between supply and demand of skills. Opportunities for implementation of mechanisms for validation of skills acquired outside of the formal system have still not found their rightful place.

The collaboration with the business sector and the realisation of practical teaching are the most challenging aspects of VET according to Greek respondents.

The providers stated that the collaboration between educational institutions and the business sector on policy and regulatory levels is necessary in order to yield results and lead to better entrance into the job market.

According to Italian respondents, the main challenges are the following:

- Perception and awareness of the benefits following the application of good quality methods
- With regard to the participation in the national project “VALES” by one upper secondary school, the respondent has pointed out the difficulty of applying the suggestions resulting from the improvement plan by teachers
- Refresher courses for the teaching staff and involvement of the entire educational community that should know and implement quality procedures, as well as share good practices concerning the teaching/learning process

- Making transparent and thus comparable the assessment methods by using common grids, starting from the units of learning outcomes dealing also with WBL, laboratory activities or project work
- Involving the whole school staff in adopting the guidelines of the Improvement Plan by designing appropriate monitoring tools
- Assessment of extracurricular activities and integration into the final assessment of the student, the teachers, the principal and other staff in view of the introduction of the welfare budget

In Lazio and Lombardy Regions all respondents agree with the benefits that Quality Assurance can bring to education programmes, but they also underline several challenges they had/still have to address when implementing QA systems:

- combining pedagogical and managerial indicators to ensure the highest quality of processes in VET;
- addressing "skills mismatch" for enhancing employment rates;
- Promoting innovative learning both from an educational/pedagogical point of view and in relation to new technologies.

In Spain, the respondents of the VET schools have been describing the following main challenges regarding the improvement of the quality of education. The items, which have been mentioned the most frequently are:

- Creation of VET schools, more flexible and better equipped education;
- Closer and constant collaboration with labour market and update of curricula;
- Provision of training for teachers
- More attention for choice of students, more flexible entry, improve process of enrolment.

In a more general way, this means:

- Define and establish clearly stated goals and objectives for continuous further development and improvement of VET, ordered in a cyclical work (PDCA cycle);
- Definition of a set of indicators to measure the stated objectives and their impacts;
- Agreement among the key stakeholders on the methodological and procedural principles that will guide its implementation

In Spain to improve the quality it is required investment in human and material resources and, since most VET schools are public, it is essential with an important economic investment by the national and regional administrations

The Swedish AVET providers indicate that there are three main challenges:

1. There is no (additional, external) demand for quality improvement; the requirement from NA sets the framework for good quality. Addressing this would require support of assessment methods as well as tools
2. There are no clear indicators and levels defined by the agency, apart from employability. Addressing this would mean that providers, government and employers agree on the relevance of additional indicators as well as on tools to measure these.
3. The system itself creates no incitement to pursue excellence if the required demands by HY are met.

Therefore, many provider hesitate to develop indicators, which are not recognised by the national agency. They are afraid that it will affect their applications for resource allocation in a negative way. There are no declarations made by the National Agency by which they promote actions or initiatives towards excellence. This lack of declared will by the agency makes the providers put their quality emphasis on those areas required by the agency, which limits quality initiatives to few areas.

4.2 Main challenge regarding teachers involvement and support needed

The majority of the Greek respondents perceived that the ability to reflect on their own teaching, critically examine the methods used and looking for alternative ways of teaching is the trainers' ability to improve the quality of education. To create an increased "quality awareness" may be of crucial importance to improve quality in education. One major way of doing this is to systematically evaluate their own teaching and its results.

According to the Greek respondents, one main risk is that evaluation can be focused too much on easily measurable school achievement, without taking into consideration the complexity of the reality.

Greek respondents also pointed out the need in IVET for the creation of a register designed for the trainers as there is only one for VET trainers at the moment. Secondly, a continuous training of trainers is considered to be imperative for the development of quality in education.

Last but not last there is a need to find and highlight alternative methods for evaluation which allow taking into account the complexity of the school environment and which give trainers a possibility to be part of the process.

The Italian respondents believe that:

- the application of quality criteria to the teachers' performance (with or without a certification) may involve an initial complexity or an additional effort for teachers and students, but at the same time a secure additional reward and recognition (which could become even an economic bonus) of the value and effectiveness of their own work

- it is important guiding the students in their learning pathway by promoting activities to motivate them, to acquire a personalized learning approach and by offering a psychological support to overcome the difficulties related not only to the school environment (decrease in the percentage of failures), but also to the external environment (early school leaving and deviant behaviour)
- it is necessary monitoring the activity of teachers by bringing out the failures in order to improve the quality of performance; sharing best practices for a successful teamwork.

In Lazio and Lombardy Regions as demonstrated above, teachers' professionalism and engagement are key factors for designing and implementing Quality management systems in VET. However, respondents mentioned specific challenges to be addressed in this regard:

- the difficulty to compare and develop shared working methods by developing and promoting compliance activities for trainers dealing with vocational training activities;
- the use of acquired skills at the work place through better sharing of specific competences and continuous training of teachers;
- to improve education rates, strengthening and implementing the career guidance after completed the school education programs;
- to enhance follow-up activities for training assessment, through the administration of questionnaires after the conclusion of the activities.

To improve the quality it is required investment in human and material resources and it is also needed an important economic support.

The Spanish respondents have made the following suggestions as to improve teachers' involvement in QA.

Main challenge	Support
Long life professional learning of teachers; Specialization of teachers	Companies / educational administration
Continuous updating of the learning curriculum; Time for teachers to prepare new and updated materials Cooperative work to do so, as well as for evaluation Take into account the improvement proposals made by teachers Offer incentives	Teaching staff / companies / educational administration
Social and professional recognition	Parents, companies and administration
Specialization on the VET courses of the school	Collaboration with other schools with the same VET course

The Swedish answers on the question regarding challenges in teacher involvement are presented in the table below.

Resp:	Main challenge	Support
23	Most of teachers do not see any connection between ISO –implementation and quality of learning in the class room	Define ISO according to the needs of HVE
19	Evidence based quality initiatives in relation to improvement of learning to motivate the teachers	Method to develop quality initiatives and processes together with staff
19	The review process	There is a need of feedback on quality review based on staff evaluation. Today they see very little connections

In Sweden the main challenges for the creation of a culture of quality (and increased involvement of the role of the teacher are considered to be:

- The teachers and tutors do not see clear relationship between quality framework like ISO and the quality of learning. ISO becomes a mark of accountability towards National agency and not a way to quality improvement. This is demotivating the teachers and trainers in AVET.
- The teachers do not see how their feedbacks and views are reflected in the review process. Managers need to stimulate and facilitate the involvement of teachers.

4.3 Conclusion

Research indicated that within the teaching institutes there are at least two different realities when it comes to the issue of quality in education: the reality of the manager and the reality of the teacher. For quality improvement the involvement and commitment of teachers becomes of utmost importance. Therefore, the interviews also addressed the issue of how to increase the involvement of teachers as a way to establish a culture of quality.

Several of the similar challenges regarding improvement of the quality of education have been mentioned by more than one country:

- The cooperation with business and practice;
- The realisation of practical training
- The guidance of students
- The perception and awareness of the benefits of working with quality
- The selection of evaluation and assessment methods and quality indicators
- The formulation of clearly stated goals and the use of a common accepted methodology
- The difficulty to compare and develop shared working methods
- The application of quality criteria to the teachers performance
- The learning from teachers failures and best practice

- The teachers workload and long life professional learning

In all countries, teachers' professionalism and engagement are key factors for designing and implementing Quality management systems in VET.

The majority of the Greek respondents perceived that the ability to reflect on their own teaching, critically examine the methods used and looking for alternative ways of teaching is the trainers' ability to improve the quality of education. To create an increased "quality awareness" may be of crucial importance to improve quality in education. One major way of doing this is to systematically evaluate their own teaching and its results.

In Sweden the main challenges for the creation of a culture of quality are considered to be linked to the fact, that the teachers and tutors do not see clear relationship between quality framework like ISO and the quality of learning; and that the teachers do not see how their feedbacks and views are reflected in the review process.

5. Good Education: peer review as a low threshold method for involving teachers

5.1 The results regarding peer review

This section of the report covers the answers on the questions regarding the usefulness of peer review in providing valid self-assessment reports, and on its perceived potential contribution to creating a sense of quality within the institute. In Europe peer review has been developed to a scientific procedure which, when used properly, can help educational institutes to collect feedback on the quality of education as well as on ways ahead in certain areas of the institute. In essence, peer review means that colleagues visit each other and give feedback to each other to help one another ahead. It can be arranged for in different ways: between schools, between departments and even between direct colleagues. As such, it could become a means to arrange for more teacher involvement in quality issues. Respondents were asked to reflect on the potential use in validated self-assessment and regarding its potential contribution in creating a sense of quality

Greek respondents have indicated that Peer Review can directly contribute to the actual improvement of those areas where VET providers themselves recognise difficulties. However, respondents also indicated that none of the providers uses it despite the fact that they seemed very keen on its usefulness. The majority is considering peer review only as a method of evaluation of teacher/trainers and not the whole institute. The key benefit of such self-evaluation procedures is to strengthen the professionalism of all trainers involved (contributing to a sense of quality).

As a tool in Greece Peer Review has raised mixed feelings: The special value of Peer Review in comparison to other external evaluation methodologies was highlighted especially by those VET providers who have comprehensive experience with external evaluation and auditing and are thus able to compare Peer Review to other types of evaluation. Additionally, VET providers are expected to be much more motivated to act upon the results of a Review if they themselves have initiated the Review and chosen the areas to be scrutinised.

However, some of the providers perceive peer review more threatening than other procedures, as it allows competitors to learn sensitive information about the organisation. They did not see the “peer” into the review, arguing that an official body is more appropriate.

Italian respondents believe that peer review is a perfect tool, as it is “external” but not a “stranger” to school life and tasks, so it is perceived as friendly and proactive; it contributes to spread, gain awareness and share the theme of quality culture creating involvement and participation; it supports quality “control” thanks to the help of external companies from the local territory; it promotes an attention towards good practices, a desire to learn in the involved staff and the improvement of the organisation in general; it facilitates constant improvement of quality in the learning offer and of innovation. This method of self-evaluation

is effective because it is enriched from the contribution of various types of experience coming from different Institutions. It also enables to find the right strategies to solve problems and issues that often occur repeatedly in the fields under examination. It allows all the stakeholders to actively participate in the improvement process, as well as meetings with the students and the teachers (through observations in classes or laboratories), with administrative staff, business representatives and families. Self-assessment reports must reflect reality, to allow the recording of improving developments. Its points of strength are: reducing the risk of self-referencing; taking advantage of the external contributions which are able to spot the real weaknesses, which often the eyes used to everyday life in the school cannot see; use of Peer Review and involvement of all stakeholders; involvement of all the school staff, who are not only scrutinized, but become motivated and protagonists of change.

Most respondents also underlined that peer review is a fundamental tool that contributes to increase awareness, participation and involvement of employees for an effective culture of quality; it promotes an attention towards good practices, a concrete improvement of the organisation in general. This evaluation method is effective because it is enriched with the contribution of various types of experiences coming from different Institutions (VET organisations and Universities). It allows relevant stakeholders to actively participate in the improvement process and to promote quality procedures and culture at a higher level.

Self-assessment reports, although with limited application in the Italian institutions, could be implemented in the vocational education and training system. Respondents pointed out the main benefits:

- reducing the risk of self-referencing;
- taking advantage of external assessment which are able to underline the real weaknesses,
- add value to self-assessment report

In fact "peer review" represents an added value tool for the self-assessment report, making it more objective and avoiding the risk that the self-assessment becomes self-referential. Self-assessment reports are included within needs analysis that each organisation duly carries out. They allow to precisely defining the training process for the attendee.

The Spanish respondents have been discussing the issue of Peer Review through the perspective of self-assessment. They have been discussing two major questions regarding self-assessment.

The first question has been about ways to make teachers understand the importance of self-assessment. Respondents indicated that it is important the self-assessment is considered and promoted in a positive way: a help to jointly continuously improve education, a benefit to students as well as teachers. This requires a good communication by the management as to engage all staff as well as embedding it in the larger frame of a quality system.

The second question addressed the creation of a quality system. To facilitate these respondents indicated that the pressure from businesses could facilitate this. However, it also requires their involvement with education since the educational system in Spain needs an adaptation to the social reality. Other respondents stressed that quality systems should not lead to extra work and such introduction should have impact on the teaching. Still other do not see any benefit in QA.

In Sweden, no information was collected on peer review as a method to facilitate the involvement of teachers in QA.

5.3 Conclusions

Respondents were asked to reflect on the potential use of peer review and regarding its potential contribution in creating a sense of quality.

Respondents indicated that none of the providers in Greece uses peer review despite the fact that they seemed very keen on its usefulness. The majority is considering peer review only as a method of evaluation of teacher/trainers and not the whole institute. The key benefit of such self-evaluation procedures is to strengthen the professionalism of all trainers involved (contributing to a sense of quality). Some of the Greek providers perceive peer review more threatening than other procedures, as it allows competitors to learn sensitive information about the organisation. They did not see the “peer” into the review, arguing that an official body is more appropriate.

Italian respondents believe that peer review is a perfect tool, as it is “external” but not a “stranger” to school life and tasks, so it is perceived as friendly and proactive; it contributes to spread, gain awareness and share the theme of quality culture creating involvement and participation.

The strength of peer review are according to the Italian respondents: reducing the risk of self-referencing; taking advantage of the external contributions which are able to spot the real weaknesses, which often the eyes used to everyday life in the school cannot see.

One question in Spain has been about ways to make teachers understand the importance of self-assessment. Respondents indicated that it is important the self-assessment is considered and promoted in a positive way: a help to jointly continuously improve education, a benefit to students as well as teachers. This requires a good communication by the management as to engage all staff as well as embedding it in the larger frame of a quality system.

Other respondents from Spain stressed that quality systems should not lead to extra work and such introduction should have impact on the teaching. Still other do not see any benefit in QA.

6. General conclusions

The research task is to report on usage of existing criteria descriptions and indicators in quality assurance at provider level in the participating countries as well as on the key qualities and usability of the selected good practices. Additionally the research needs to address the guidelines that are going to be developed for managers and experts responsible for QA policy of the institutes, as well as teachers who need to be involved in the QA policy.

Due to the nature of the project, the information was collected through face-to-face interviews or through group interviews at provider level, covering teachers, managers and board members. The questionnaire focused on:

- Good quality of education
- Current usage of heart of EQAVET (PDCA-cycle)
- Indicators used to assure for a good learning outcome
- Peer review methodology as means to improve QA

In total was 101 actors interviewed with 17 in Greece, 18 in Italy, 24 in Spain and finally 42 in Sweden. Average duration of a face-to-face or telephone interview was 45 minutes. Response was stored in standard report templates, which assured for anonymous data processing.

During the different interviews, two different definitions of good quality of education have been used. The first definition is the one that is provided by the respondent him/herself. The second definition is the standard definition which is also used by the European Commission in relation to quality assurance in education: "Quality of any educational institute depends on the capacity to achieve prior set targets".

The research in partner countries covers a wide range of education. Almost all areas of education as well as levels have been addressed for in the research. The scale of the involved institutes is different varying from rather small institutes in Sweden to very big institutes in Italy.

The differences both at provider and at country level give us an excellent overview of the wide range of practices in Europe.

6.1 Good quality of education

The different countries agree on the following criteria for good quality of education:

- Employability
- Continuous review, evaluation with involvement of all the relevant stakeholders
- Continuous process of updating and adaption to meet labour market needs
- Create a culture of quality throughout the organisation
- Leadership is a major facilitator for creating a culture of quality
- Develop a learning environment which parallels the actual vocational environment
- Focus on learning outcomes with measurable indicators
- Personalised pathways of education

In general are the list of criteria for good quality of education long and very detailed for each partner and country, and with a high degree of similarity among the criteria.

It is interesting that implementation of an internal quality management system by VET providers was NOT mentioned as a crucial issue to improve quality at their level.

The following indicators for and measurements of quality of education have been mentioned in all partner countries:

- Student satisfaction
- Students satisfaction of WBL
- Promotion/completion rate
- Competence of teachers
- Employability, interest of employers
- Recognition of qualifications in labour market
- Participation of vulnerable groups

It is interesting that most countries do NOT mention the EQAVET indicators, even if many of the used indicators at provider level are similar to the EQAVET quality indicators. This indicates for us, that the knowledge and use of EQAVET-indicators are limited at provider level in many countries.

6.2 EQAVET criteria and descriptors of quality

EQAVET is in general little known among the respondents even though its PDCA cycle has a clear meaning and are used in practice. Only few schools has shown to be implementing all four phases, especially revision for improvement, while most schools stop at the first two: planning and implementation.

In summary in the partner countries, the attention for the EQAVET continuous improvement cycle is perceived as having great importance, but instead receives a “just sufficient” score for its actual consequent usage. There is much room for improvement in this area. Partners refer to barriers in terms of differences in constraint coming from different quality models, the different appeals coming from national boards or authorities, the related bureaucracy as well as the need for a culture of quality, which is essential for the promotion of continuous improvement of education.

The respondents’ answers indicate a very high rate of use of the EQAVET descriptors among most of the responding providers, especially regarding the planning, implementation and review phases.

The respondents’ use of the descriptors for evaluation and actors/stakeholders differ between the different countries, but again here with a high degree of usage of the EQAVET descriptors.

The respondents indicate that the cycle itself is perceived as valuable and essential. At the level of descriptors, EQAVET needs more promotion, explanation as well as support to improve implementation. The descriptor which was considered most appealing by respondents' is the descriptor referring to training of teachers. It was indicated that some EQAVET descriptors are not included in current QA frameworks used by some providers, and vice versa, EQAVET also misses aspects (adequacy of equipment, student feedback, quality of information and guidance f.e.). Responses indicate that EQAVET requires more detailed explanation as well as further promotion.

6.3 Challenges regarding improvement of the quality

Several of the similar challenges regarding improvement of the quality of education have been mentioned by more than one country:

- The cooperation with business and practice;
- The realisation of practical training
- The guidance of students
- The perception and awareness of the benefits of working with quality
- The selection of evaluation and assessment methods and quality indicators
- The formulation of clearly stated goals and the use of a common accepted methodology
- The difficulty to compare and develop shared working methods
- The application of quality criteria to the teachers performance
- The learning from teachers failures and best practice
- The teachers workload and long life professional learning

In all countries, teachers' professionalism and engagement are key factors for designing and implementing Quality management systems in VET.

Respondents perceived that the ability to reflect on their own teaching, critically examine the methods used and looking for alternative ways of teaching is the trainers' ability to improve the quality of education. To create an increased "quality awareness" may be of crucial importance to improve quality in education. One major way of doing this is to systematically evaluate their own teaching and its results.

6.4 Peer review

There are – according to the respondents - advantages and disadvantages of using peer review in creating a sense of quality.

The majority of respondents in Greece is considering peer review only as a method of evaluation of teacher/trainers and not the whole institute. The key benefit of such self-evaluation procedures is to strengthen the professionalism of all trainers involved (contributing to a sense of quality). Some of the Greek providers perceive peer review more threatening, as it allows competitors to learn sensitive information about the organisation.

Italian respondents believe that peer review is a perfect tool, as it is “external” but not a “stranger” to school life and tasks, so it is perceived as friendly and proactive; it contributes to spread, gain awareness and share the theme of quality culture creating involvement and participation.

The strength of peer review are according to the Italian respondents: reducing the risk of self-referencing; taking advantage of the external contributions which are able to spot the real weaknesses, which often the eyes used to everyday life in the school cannot see.

One question in Spain has been about ways to make teachers understand the importance of self-assessment. Respondents indicated that it is important the self-assessment is considered and promoted in a positive way: a help to jointly continuously improve education, a benefit to students as well as teachers. This requires a good communication by the management as to engage all staff as well as embedding it in the larger frame of a quality system.

Other respondents from Spain stressed that quality systems should not lead to extra work and such introduction should have impact on the teaching. Still other do not see any benefit in QA.

Annexes

Good practices

For a more detailed description of then good practices please consult the different country reports.

Greece:

What was started?	Alumni mentoring scheme
Why it was started?	Create relationships between students and alumni who were once in their shoes
How it was done:	Regular events organised by the organisation where current students have the opportunity to meet with past students that allow to: Create mentorship opportunities Provide support and guidance Sharing personal experiences
What was the impact?	Academic guidance, career and personal advice
Indicators used to establish impact	Students satisfaction rate (questionnaire)

Italy:

What was started?	“Osservatorio Galilei” Internal informal Bulletin of the school community
Why it was started?	In a school community, just like in any other type of society, positive aspects tend to get less attention than negative ones. The aim of the activity is to promote and highlight positive initiatives and actions.
How it was done:	a) Building an essential, informative text, that was meant to be informal and to cover all the positive, successful actions and events within the school community. b) Publishing of the internal bulletin, at first on paper, then online on the College official website.
What was the impact?	Whoever had been the protagonist of a positive event or had promoted it could ask that it would be published on the bulletin. Whoever had promoted a positive event or had

	been the protagonist in it and did not see it advertised on the bulletin, could complain to the Principal about it.
Indicators used to establish impact	a) Number of internal bulletins issued b) Amount of positive events to be published amount of complaints about events not selected for publication

What was started?	Vocational high school “Alfred Nobel” - Rome. School project: "sports and education: no competition” The definition of customized learning paths for sports and e - learning platform.
Why it was started?	To allow all students involved in competitive and professional sports activities to successfully continue their education and training.
How it was done:	Through specific teacher training staff, creation of appropriate instruments to the pursued aim in cooperation with stakeholders linked to the institutional and environmental system, investment of additional economic resources in order to ensure new spaces and methodologies for teaching.
What was the impact?	The increasing number of professional sport students registered in the institute, (eg. In the last two years it has passed from 1% to 10%)
Indicators used to establish impact	Individuals belonging to the targeted categories participating in the educational and vocational training activities and success rate.

Spain:

What was started?	Former students computerised database
Why it was started?	Answer to job offers from companies; Keep in contact with former students career development; Feedback from our students on education; Alumni give something back to the school
How it was done:	Send e-mails to former students; Create a group; Bit by bit add colleges and all partners; Periodic update of student info collected; Periodic info messages to students; Today exchange by WhatsApp.
What was the impact?	The students feel identified with his school, they are also the contact between the school and the companies, training tutors, and as external agents that can provide the school with measurable quality indicators and improvement proposals in the specific VET sector of the school. A platform to offer jobs news, advices, activities, related to our sector (VET Family) as well as current students.
Indicators used to establish impact	Number of former students who get a job Number of students and companies that use the platform

Sweden:

What was started?	Work Based Learning Program
Why it was started?	
How it was done:	
What was the impact?	High employer satisfaction High Student satisfaction
Indicators used to establish impact	75-80% employability