

# EXPANDING THE QUALITY SPIRIT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TEACHING

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## **Abstract**

### **Introduction**

*This project was carried out within the context of European Union, Lifelong Learning Programme Leonardo da Vinci, under the coordination of Folkuniversitetet from Sweden with the participation of other partners consisting of Quality Austria (Austria), Beypazarı District Directorate for National Education (Turkey), General Directorate for Friuli Venezia Giulia School Inspection Service (Italy), Institute of Economics, Management and Law of Kazan (Russia), N.P. Pastuhov's State Academy of Industrial Management (Russia), Revalento (Netherlands) and Tomsk State University (Russia). The aim of the project was to develop a set of guidelines which enable and support the leadership in a Vocational Education and Teaching (VET)-provider organization to motivate and engage teaching staff in quality assurance initiatives.*

### **Methods**

*This project was conducted with the help of all partner countries above and the project methodology was built around the principles relating to the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) for VET. The guidelines which were the main goal of our project were created with the data obtained through the questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and national seminars that were carried out among VET managers, teachers and stakeholders in all partner countries.*

### **Results**

*After the interviews, questionnaires and the national seminar for VET providers, it has been understood that the teachers are likely to be involved in quality assurance process with the help of some recommendations related to the four stages of Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. The results of the project work packages led to the creation of a manual of Guidelines for managers to contribute to the culture of Quality, more specifically to the involvement and participation of teachers in quality initiatives, as well as to strengthening the link between quality initiatives and teaching (outcomes) and in following through a complete PDCA-cycle. The creation of proper understanding and commitment regarding the need for certain quality initiatives, their effect on the teaching outcome, and ways to systematically follow them through all will contribute to the development of a culture of Quality.*

### **Conclusion**

*As a conclusion, one of the most important problems that quality assurance initiatives in VET institutions encounter is that the teachers are not so willing to take part in those processes. Therefore, the managers or headmasters need to find ways to motivate them to engage in the quality practices. In this respect, our final manual of the Guidelines provides solutions and recommendations to these obstacles and to strengthen the link between the quality initiatives and teaching outcomes.*

**Keywords:** quality; quality initiative; Vocational Education and Teaching

## Introduction

Our project “Expanding the Quality Spirit of Vocational Education and Teaching” (QinVET) is a Life Long Learning Leonardo da Vinci project funded by European Commission carried out by the partnership that is composed of Folkuniversitetet from Sweden with the participation of other partners consisting of Quality Austria (Austria), Beypazari District Directorate for National Education (Turkey), General Directorate for Friuli Venezia Giulia School Inspection Service (Italy), Institute of Economics, Management and Law of Kazan (Russia), N.P. Pastuhov’s State Academy of Industrial Management (Russia), Revalento (Netherlands) and Tomsk State University (Russia). The rationale behind our project resulted from the outcomes of the second QALLL (Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Adult Education (AE) conference 28th November 2011 in Berlin in which education professionals and experts, project contractors of the European Lifelong Learning Programmes Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig, policy makers, national authorities, social partner representatives and other stakeholders interested in quality assurance in VET and AE participated. As a result of the workshops at the conference, it is indicated that regardless of the quality model VET providers use, it will not improve the quality of learning and organisation unless the staff are informed, motivated and engaged in the planning, implementation, evaluation and review process of Quality Management. The reason of this explained by the participants is that there seems to be two different cultures in educational institutions which are a ‘rationalist bureaucratic culture’, which is hierarchical, structured in time and activity and an ‘autonomous professional culture’: self-organized, self- and peer-assessed, collegial decision-making. The latter is the culture embraced by teaching staff in VET. These two cultures show that there is an extreme difference between the perceptions of the administration and the teaching staff by the word “Quality.” Generally speaking, common perceptions of the teaching staffs related to Quality initiatives are:

- The impact of the quality is more on paper flow than on teaching.
- The relationship between quality initiatives and the actual learning is not clear: it is difficult to see a link between an award for business excellence and learning experience.
- Teaching staff think that there aren’t any quality initiatives which directly increase the quality of education of their students.

To sum up, our experiences and reviewed research have showed us that there is a need for guidelines which enables the leadership in a VET-provider to motivate and engage the teaching staff for an active participation in quality initiative.

## Objectives

The main purpose of our project has been to develop a set of guidelines which enable and support the leadership in a VET-provider organisation to motivate and engage teaching staff in quality assurance initiatives. The guidelines on institutional preparations which promote the participatory approach to ensure wide involvement of the teaching staff will consist of guidelines-manuals, complemented with practical advices and best practices from participating countries and other EU-experiences, covering following questions:

- How to create awareness of quality assurance ideology and benefits
  - How to engage staff in selection of Quality assurance model
  - How to involve the staff in the planning of the Quality initiative
  - How to keep the engagement of the teaching staff during the QA implementation
  - How to plan the evaluation process of QA finding with the teaching staff
  - How to review and plan for improvement of the VET-activities
  - How to translate this to leadership style and promotion of a shared vision on VET-education
- While achieving our goals in the project, we conducted our researches and work on the basis of the principles relating to the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) for VET and we focused on the four stages of Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. These stages have been taken into account as Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Review in the guideline prepared within the scope of our project. To formulate the guideline-manual, all partner countries made contributions using their expertise with the help of national and regional seminars, face-to-face interviews, online questionnaires, and workshops. By preparing the guidelines, we also aimed to address a problem that Quality assurance faces not only in a few countries, but also through the whole Europe, thus trying to enable all VET-providers (leadership and teaching staff), National agencies involved in VET/CVET, Policy makers at a local, regional, national and European level, Lifelong Learning Institutes with various cultures in a European network to benefit from the outcomes and findings of our project.

## Conclusion

As a result of a meticulous and comprehensive work and researches of all partners, a manual of guidelines has been created for managers to contribute to the culture of Quality, more specifically to the involvement and participation of teachers in quality initiatives, as well as to strengthening the link between quality initiatives and teaching (outcomes) and in following through a complete PDCA-cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act).

For the different aspects of quality management, this manual distinguishes 12 separate areas, covering the whole PDCA cycle. Those are the areas, which can support managers who are interested in the introduction of a complete quality management system, like ISO, TQM etc. But also for those managers who want to introduce an initiative for the improvement of some part of the organisation / the education process. Either big or small, each part of the PDCA offers some guidelines and recommendations as to how to address this stage in a way that does credit to teacher involvement, educational benefits and proper management of the process. In the annexes, some good practices are presented which illustrate actions taken in the different parts of the process.

These 12 areas and the recommendations are illustrated below:

### 1. Demonstrate leadership

- *Program participation*
- *Take the Initiative*
- *Demonstrate Commitment*
- *Create More Leaders*
- *Guide the Efforts of Others*
- *Remove Roadblocks and Barriers*

### 2. Build awareness

- *Build Your Personal Awareness*
- *Consensus Building*
- *Agree upon a timeline*
- *Define and inform your stakeholders*

### 3. Open and maintain lines of communication

### 4. Create a constancy of purpose

### 5. Focus on the customer

### 6. Choose early efforts in visible areas critical to success

- *Address anxiety and resistance*
- *Address critical issues that are also important to stakeholders*
- *Start the process of improvement at the highest level possible*
- *Start with the processes you own and work to improve the system*

### 7. Develop teamwork

- *Work toward inclusion of everyone in improvement team*

### 8. Provide support, training, and education

- *Facilitate Team Development and Activity*
- *Continuous training of managers and quality process leaders*
- *Support and reinforce team behaviour and performance*
- *Recognize effort and approach, not just results*

### 9. Build trust and respect (referred to as Culture of Quality)

### 10. Create an environment in which continuous improvement is a way of life

- *Show that people are your most important asset*
- *Value and encourage individual contributions*
- *Listen for Even the Smallest Voice*
- *Promote reflection as part of teaching*

**11. Continuously improve all processes**

- *Create time for staff to address improvement actions*
- *Organize to support for improvement*
- *Remove complexity: simplify, consolidate, eliminate*
- *Gradual small incremental improvements*
- *Internal audit*

**12. Expand culture to your stakeholders.**

As a conclusion, with the help of these guidelines, we expect that administration or leaders of VET will try to motivate and involve teaching staff in quality process efficiently and contribute much to the consolidation of the relationship between teaching, learning and quality initiatives.

**Authors**

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Drs Roger Van de Winkel, founder of the consultancy is active in this field since 1998. He has been involved in the introduction and implementation of the QA standard Investor in People in the Netherlands focussing lifelong learning within organisations.

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