

Documentation of expert panels

by National Agencies

I General information

Date/Venue:	June 17th 2011 / NA AT, Ebendorferstraße 7, 1010 Vienna
Organising institution(s):	NA AT
No. of participants:	11
Types of experts	Representatives of VET schools, adult education organisations, social partners, research institutions, ministry of education
Rapporteur	Barbara Höller

Attach invitation and programme and list of participants (names, institutions).

II Key issue

→ Review phase of the EQAVET cycle

III Results

III.1 Experiences and Status Quo

Aims of the Review Phase

The goal of the fourth phase ideally is a gain in quality by 1) analysing evaluation results and carrying out the improvements required and 2) by reconsidering and improving the (again) ensuing phases planning, implementation and evaluation of the next quality cycle. This can be achieved in different ways. For example, by "repair", redesigning, re-planning, but also through the continuation of successful processes.

One of the most critical factors of a review phase is that the purpose(s) of the quality assurance measures is/are clarified and that all important stakeholders, and especially those who need to become active in the review phase, have a shared view. In the short run, meeting external (minimum) standards (e.g. for certification) can be an important goal asking for corrective measures in the review phase if standards are not met. In the long run, the experts agreed, that only a strive for constant improvement (or even excellence) makes sense.

Apart from that it is also important that staff not only see the extra work and burden involved but also recognise how quality assurance can improve their own practice.

Documentation

A continuous documentation is first of all associated with a lot of work and thus often tried to be avoided. Documentation, however, is needed in order to follow a facts-based, transparent approach. Documentation should be limited to the data actually needed to increase acceptability with staff and to ensure efficiency. The quality of data also depends on a solid and continuous data collection process: Hurriedly filling out forms in the face of pressure of an approaching deadline usually does not lead to high-quality data.

Benchmarks - Indicators / Do they really bring momentum into systems?

As a sort of trigger some companies work with the introduction of benchmarks in the international arena. Benchmarks are used as quality standards to motivate the quality improvement. However, the problem is that only sophisticated benchmarks lead to meaningful results.

There might be good numeric data for reports, but this does not necessarily result in an improvement of the system. Only benchmarks which have a meaning to the people responsible for review and improvement will lead to action being taken.

The review phase also includes a critical assessment of the indicators/benchmarks used. In the case of an absence of useful measurable parameters, new goals should be formulated where appropriate, and existing targets should be reviewed.

III.2 Challenges

The choice of the right timing for the Review Phase

Timing is essential for a successful review phase. Enough time should be allotted to implement improvements. On the other hand, improvement phases should not be too drawn out.

With educational institutions, the timing within the school/study year is also crucial: Involved staff needs to have the time and resources. Trying to implement improvements during a hot phase of final exams for instance will jeopardise the success of the review phase. For schools the beginning of summer vacation creates a predetermined breaking point.

Therefore, a schedule for the 4th phase and the entire QA is essential. However, the fourth Phase can be seen quite flexible rather than a rigid process.

Further critical factors in the implementation of the Review Phase

- Previous phase – evaluation is not the most important part of the four phases, but to be seen as a part of the project cycle. As resources, attention and monitoring, however, are heavily concentrated on the evaluation phase, the other phases of the project are most likely to fall behind. It's a challenge if evaluations produce significant results, but are not supported/acknowledged by the staff.
- Responsibility of management to set targets and to develop visions and resulting from that
- The responsibility of all for the implementation of the processes
- Realize when documentation really does make sense, not every single process needs to be documented
- If methods are used, in other words if something should be changed, only methods should be used which have previously been tested and met the acceptance of everybody involved, Keyword: "Take time & care to define appropriate methods"
- Clarity about the objectives of the QM
school development goes hand in hand with development of educational provision
- Also consider the development potential of staff → integrate human resource development: Who implements? - Who has the expertise? - Who can and who wants to further train themselves in that direction?
- In schools, quality assurance and quality development is usually running parallel
- In adult education it is more difficult to capture quality. Hardly anyone makes exams.
- Schools or educational institutions are businesses (with accounting, business services, etc.) where also performance, quality and customer orientation counts.

III.3 State of the art and good practices

What is the state of the art in dealing with the key issue?

What are good practices and why? (Describe examples)

III.4 Recommendations

Clarity about the objectives of the QM/quality assurance

Most important for the review phase is first and foremost that it takes place at all (!). Often the 4. phase of the quality cycle is simply skipped e.g. due to shortage of time at the end of a project. Secondly it is crucial that the strengths identified are being reinforced. Moreover the review phase should be seen as a corrective. It presents the chance to clarify in which direction the institution/a project wants to head.

To this end the objectives should be formulated and defined by the management/those responsible. Thereby the question arises what quality assurance actually means to an organisation. Does the institution simply want a signboard showing it has some QM system to hang on the wall, or does it really want to learn within a permanent process, develop it's strengths in a sustainable long term perspective?

Evaluation:

Evaluation should not be seen as an end point but as the beginning of a process:

- Where is a need for change?
- What is the status quo?
- Evaluation as a guide for future work.

The will for improvement:

One should not equate QM with the creation of mere statistics. The key to an effective QM consists in the desire for improvement. Statistical trends do not necessarily stand for real improvements.

- Also consider the development potential of staff → integrate human resource development: Who implements? - Who has the expertise? - Who can and who wants to further train themselves in that direction?

Documentation:

A constant documentation is above all connected with a lot of work and thus gladly avoided. Nevertheless a straight consistent documentation over a longer period of time offers the possibility to avoid the pressure of an approaching deadline and thus effectively improve quality.

Communication of results

It is not sufficient to only document the results of the fourth phase – they also have to be communicated, reports and surveys made publicly available! In particular (in writing) to those who continue to work with the information obtained. An essential part is therefore to communicate the results! For this step, time is the essential factor.

Reports as a trigger for teamwork:

Reports represent work, but they should also be seen as an approach to mobilize a team. There's no need to write report after report, however, it can be used as a powerful tool. Again, evaluation should not be seen as an end point but as the beginning of a process.

Benchmarks - Indicators / Do they really bring momentum into systems?

HOW DO WE SET A SYSTEM IN MOTION (in either direction) WHICH IS REASONABLE?

WHAT TOOLS DO WE USE?

Keywords: Proliferation of indicators! Might politically be effective for external communication but not necessarily be a useful tool.

Less is more – only collect data for indicators that are 1) meaningful and 2) used. Try to make sense use of indicators which are imposed externally (i.e. by the national quality assurance system).

Indicators support quality assurance work (by “indicating” the level of goal-attainment or provide comparison) but must not to be misunderstood to be the main goal.

NB: Not the indicator shall be seen as the most important

Review phase = a corrective

Responsible for the implementation is the quality management team.

Hence targets are both predefined (e.g. ISO) and self-defined. The attention should be directed towards the self-defined goals so that they can genuinely be "lived". The question should thereby be "What do we need?" and not "What is required from outside?"

As many employees as possible should be involved in the definition of targets and methods. The responsibility for success or failure of the policy lies within the management (director, etc).

In a school the head would have the responsibility, as many school staff as possible would have to be involved, teachers for example would have to recognize benefits for themselves, the QM team would have to support them in the implementation.

General further recommendations for a successful review phase

Have an eye on development on the EU level. Attention shouldn't only be given to Austria related developments. It has also proven useful to watch out for QA methods that worked well in other countries. Summarize what's happening in other countries; what could be interesting for me/for my institution.

Experiences should be described understandable and replicable e.g. how has the quality of teaching (or measures in the institution) changed concretely.

The question "Is a training/tuition is good or not?" won't possibly be answered in a vacuum. Since the question is this "who is the potential recipient of the qualified alumni" and how does he assesses the training or the alumni/graduates. Take for example take a IVET school: recipient could be a university or a company.

There are quality characteristics that relate to the process itself and on the effects of the process. Both must be taken in QM.

A good QM ensures that all those participating in the process have a clear understanding what task they have to perform in the entire process.

IV Additional comments

Austrian Stakeholders invited to the national expert panel very both interested in the thematic network QALLL and keen on taking part in the expert panel. The discussion was lively and produced several recommendations (see above). All participants expressed their interest in continuing this fruitful exchange of experiences and know-how.

What especially turned out to be fruitful and welcomed by the attendees was the exchange of experiences between representatives of VET and AE. The Austrian NA wants to meet this request and organise such expert panels/meetings also in the future, beyond the official end of the QALLL project.

V Annex

V.1 Invitation

Sehr geehrter Herr König,

die OeAD / Nationalagentur Lebenslanges Lernen möchte Sie ganz herzlich zu einem nationalen Expertenworkshop im Rahmen des thematischen Netzwerks **QALLL – Quality Assurance in Lifelong learning** einladen. Das QALLL-Netzwerk, im Rahmen dessen Partnereinrichtungen aus 17 europäischen Ländern kooperieren, unterstützt Initiativen zur Qualitätssicherung in der Berufs- und Erwachsenenbildung (nähere Informationen: <http://www.qalll.eu>)

Wir würden uns sehr freuen, Sie als Expertin im:

**nationalen QALLL-Workshop,
am Freitag, dem 17. Juni 2011, 8:30 – 13:00 Uhr
in der Oead-GmbH / Nationalagentur Lebenslanges Lernen, Ebendorferstr. 7, 1010 Wien
(Sitzungszimmer 4.14, 4. Stock)**

begrüßen zu dürfen. In dieser Runde, die sich aus Vertreter/innen von Bildungseinrichtungen, Ministerien & Forschungseinrichtungen zusammensetzen wird, möchten wir in kleiner Runde Schlüsselfaktoren der Qualitätssicherung diskutieren. Wir möchten dabei auf Ihre Erfahrungen und gute Praxis zurückgreifen. Die Ergebnisse der nationalen Workshops werden in weiterer Folge u.a. in eine Publikation mit Empfehlungen zur Qualitätssicherung in der europäischen Berufs- und Erwachsenenbildung einfließen.

Zur Vorbereitung finden Sie in der Anlage ein 2-seitiges Dokument (QALLL Guiding Questions_Review) das Maria Gutknecht-Gmeiner, die den Expertenworkshop nächste Woche moderieren wird, gemeinsam mit weiteren ExpertInnen zum Thema Veränderungsmanagement entworfen hat.

Wir würden Sie im Vorfeld gerne bitten sich Gedanken zu den folgenden drei Fragen zu machen:

- Welche sind Ihrer Meinung die größten Herausforderungen im Bereich Veränderungsmanagement, wenn es um Qualitätssicherung in der beruflichen Aus- und Weiterbildung und der Erwachsenenbildung geht?
- Welche Beispiele guter Praxis sind Ihnen im Bereich Veränderungsmanagement betreffend Qualitätssicherung in der beruflichen Aus- und Weiterbildung und der Erwachsenenbildung bekannt?
- Wie kann die Implementierung von Veränderungsmanagement in der beruflichen Aus- und Weiterbildung und der Erwachsenenbildung gefördert und unterstützt werden?

Eine Übersicht über die EQAVET-Deskriptoren für den Bereich Veränderungsmanagement bzw. Review finden sie auf der interaktiven EQAVET Website zum Qualitätszirkel: <http://www.eqavet.eu/qa/gns/home.aspx> bzw. in den EQVET Recommendations auf Seite 6 im Anhang I.

Das Terminavisos ist sehr kurzfristig – wir würden uns aber über Ihre Interesse an diesem Workshop teilzunehmen bzw. jemanden mit Expertise in diesem Bereich zu nominieren sehr freuen!

Bei Fragen stehen wir sehr gerne zur Verfügung!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller
Bereichsleiterin Querschnittsmaterien

Barbara Höller
QALLL-Koordinatorin



Education and Culture DG

Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning
Thematic Monitoring



V.2 List of participants

	Name	Einrichtung	E-mail Adresse	✓
1	Jürgen Horschinegg	BMUKK	juergen.horschinegg@bmukk.gv.at	✓
2	Johanna Weismann	Ö-Cert	johanna.weismann@oe-cert.at	✓
3	Jörg Schielin	SPAR Akademie	Joerg.schielin@spar.at	X
4	Bibiana Rydel	IBC Hetzendorf	brydel@ibc.ac.at	✓
5	Roland Löffler	ÖIBF	roland.loeffler@oeibf.at	✓
6	Judita Löderer	Verband der österr. VHS	judita.loederer@vhs.or.at	✓
7	Alfred Freundlinger	WKO	alfred.freundlinger@wko.at	✓
8	Gabriele Schmid	AK Wien	gabriele.schmid@akwien.at	X
9	Ulrike Blanckenstein	HLW19 Straßergasse	u.blanckenstein@hlw19.at	✓
10	Claudia Zekl	Schulen des bfi Wien	claudiazekl@aon.at	✓
11	Ulrike Wiedersich	BHAK/BHAS Bruck/Leitha	ulrike.wiedersich@gmail.com	✓
12	Maria Gutknecht- Gmeiner	Impulse	m.gutknecht-gmeiner@impulse.at	✓
13	Carin Daniel-Ramirez-Schiller	Nationalagentur Lebenslanges Lernen	carin.daniel-ramirez-schiller@oead.at	X
14	Barbara Höller	Nationalagentur Lebenslanges Lernen	barbara.hoeller@oead.at	✓