

**Quality culture and education  
quality: conceptual framework for  
the development of a team  
quality portrait**

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of team quality portraits  
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## Introduction

Upper secondary vocational education (MBO) institutions aim to provide quality education. Administrators nevertheless observe that, despite the focus on quality assurance systems, the discussion on good education has been relegated to the background in recent years.<sup>1</sup> It seems that there are two separate worlds that exist alongside each other: the world of quality assurance and the world of working at education quality, particularly in the primary process.

This document provides a conceptual framework to explore this issue. What part can focus on quality culture play in education quality enhancement? In 2015 and 2016, the NCP EQAVET formulated the basis for this conceptual framework, which it subsequently discussed and refined during workshops with the various parties concerned. This framework formed the basis for the multi-day expert meeting on the quality culture enhancement, which the NCP EQAVET organised in the Netherlands in September 2016. Read the results of this expert meeting [here](#). On several occasions during MBO Quality Network Expertise Group meetings, the NCP EQAVET raised this conceptual framework and the results of the substantive discussions have been incorporated in this revised version of the conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework forms the basis for the development of a 'team quality portrait' used by the NCP EQAVET to conduct pilots in 2017. Completion of this guide for the development of a team quality portrait, including the scans to be used, is scheduled for December 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Report on boardroom results in respect of Quality Culture in education teams (January 2016)

# 1 Background and objectives

## *Background*

All upper vocational education (MBO) institutions in the Netherlands have a quality assurance system to guarantee and enhance the education quality. Most will have been using such a system for at least a decade. Various QA systems are in use. Quality assurance has proven to be a useful tool for external reporting. Unfortunately, however, its impact on the quality of education is less clear.

In a recent memorandum, Korsten even concluded that there was little or no relation between quality assurance systems and their impact on education quality.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, therefore, administrators find thinking purely in terms of systems as a means of quality assurance to be too restrictive. They use such terms as: system-mode approach, systems thinking straitjacket, confidence in control as rather than in people, system world, system pressure. During a Boardroom Table meeting<sup>3</sup> they expressed the need to escape from this 'systems obsession' – without wishing to dispense with the value of those systems. They would like to reap more internal benefits of their quality assurance, enabling them to learn in an ongoing cyclic process and to improve the quality of the student education.

More concretely, actors in vocational education wonder how 'quality culture enhancement' could offer add new impetus to quality assurance. 'Quality culture' refers to the often implicit codes of conduct and self-evident truths within their organisation. They also express a need to shift focus from centralised to decentralised teaching teams.<sup>4</sup> This is consistent with the aim of many years in senior vocational education to create more professional freedom for teachers, enabling them to perform to their potential.

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<sup>2</sup> For example:

- Korsten, A.F. (2015). What upper vocational education (MBO) institutions have to offer [*Wat instellingen in het mbo te bieden hebben*]. An evaluation of the period 2009-2015. MBO Quality Council and Quality Network
- Oomens, M. et al. (2015). Using information to improve quality [*Informatiegebruik voor kwaliteitsverbetering*]. Utrecht/Nijmegen. Oberon/KBA commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.
- EQAVET.NL (2011). NL-QAVET Quality Assurance Review Report 's-Hertogenbosch.

<sup>3</sup> Meetings for administrators of institutions within the MBO Quality Network Expertise Group.

<sup>4</sup> This was apparent during the MBO Quality Network talks held in preparation of the Roadmap 2016-2020. This line of thought was already initiated during the MBO Quality Network conference 'Quality: from systems to genes' on 1 October 2015.

## *Objectives*

The purpose of this document is to clarify the concept of 'quality culture' – in the light of the context outlined above – and thus contribute to a common language and meaning of the concept within the field of vocational education.<sup>5</sup> This is because 'quality culture' is at risk of becoming a (new) umbrella term. It is easily used with different meanings. The fact that the term is not clearly defined makes it difficult to link concrete actions to it and to assess their effectiveness. Another objective of this document is to consider the relationship between education quality, quality management and quality culture. Finally, another aim is to make concrete inventions is to show possible variations of concrete interventions enhance the quality of education being responsive to the quality culture.

Structure of this document:

- Firstly, a number of components are identified which influence the education quality. (2)
- Then, the term quality culture is discussed, as well as the way it relates to education quality. (3)
- Subsequently, the interpretation of the concept of quality culture in terms of values and the way in which it can be implemented in vocational education is considered. (4)
- This is then translated into a guide for the development of a team quality portrait. (5)
- Finally, several conclusions are drawn in the summary. (6)

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<sup>5</sup> Within the scope of the European Q-Kult project, several studies are ongoing examining quality culture in education, each with its own research question:

- Kurz, S. & H. Ittner (2016). Analyse der Schulische Qualitätskultur mit dem Instrument OCAI. Handreichung.

**Research question:** How does the specific culture of a school influence the implementation and/or further development of quality management and what part could OCAI play?

- Fellingner, J. & J. Markowitsch (2015). Is there such a thing as school quality culture?

Research question: What do we know about the relationship between school culture and quality management and how could that relationship be expressed in a model?

The above studies emphasise the relationship between quality management (TQM) and the culture of a school. This document focuses on a slightly different question, namely the relationship between quality culture and the quality of the education.

## 2 Influencing Education Quality

Based on current practice in education, a quality system tends to be the first thing we think of in relation to the management of the quality of education. Such a system is visibly in place and applies for the whole organisation; it is collective. However, as working with such systems does not entirely meet the requirements, we are also examining other components to improve education quality.

The possibilities are charted using a quadrant based on two dimensions: individual/collective; visible/invisible.<sup>6</sup>

### *Collective/individual dimension*

The collective aspect concerns the performance of the organisation as a whole or of groups of people. The individual aspect concerns personal performance.

### *Visible/invisible dimension*

The visible aspect relates to 'hard' signs which are immediately noticeable. The invisible aspect relates to 'soft' signs, which have a more subconscious or indirect influence.

Together, these two dimensions form a quadrant with four cells, each containing a component to ensure the quality of education (see figure 1).

- **Cell 1: *Systems***  
These are collective, visible components; harder, tangible and controllable factors. In relation to quality assurance, this will include such quality systems as ISO, INK and Six Sigma. Ultimately, the curriculum, examination conditions, internal organisation, ICT environment, and so on are all also intended to facilitate education quality.
- **Cell 2: *Conduct and professionalism***  
These are individual, visible components. With regard to quality assurance, these concern individual skills, employees' competencies, their diplomas and their professional conduct. Areas of intervention include the training of and refresher courses taken by teachers, management and administrators.
- **Cell 3: *Quality awareness***  
These are individual but less visible components. These refer to soft, more subconscious and less controllable factors. With regard to quality assurance, this concerns individual quality awareness as a component; an individual commitment to quality based on a person's underlying mindset and the criteria everyone sets for themselves. Examples of such interventions include: annual development interview, reflection on and improvement of personal core competencies, corrective interview or reflection on student feedback.

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<sup>6</sup> For example:

- Marrewijk, B. van (2011). *De Cubrix. Zicht op organisatieontwikkeling en performanceverbetering*. Lindonk & de Bres.
- Ofman, D.D. (1992). *Bezieling en kwaliteit in organisaties*. Servire, Meppel.

- Cell 4: *Quality Culture*

Here we find collective and more visible components. With regard to quality assurance, this concerns the quality culture shared by the people involved as reflected in their collaborative patterns, convictions and values. Interventions could include encouraging teams and departments to make their current quality culture more explicit and to further develop it through peer review, dialogue or Socratic discussion.

<i>Visible</i>	2 Conduct and professionalism	1 Systems
<i>Invisible</i>	3 Quality awareness	4 Quality culture
	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Collective</i>

Figure 1: Components to enhance the quality of education

The iceberg metaphor is a good way of visualising the four components. The components above water are quality systems and the professional conduct of employees, while those underwater are quality awareness and quality culture.

While less tangible, the underwater domain nevertheless plays an important part in the performance of the organisation.<sup>7</sup> There is much research (outside the educational field) which demonstrates that soft control interventions applied to improve quality are more effective than interventions by means of systems (hard controls).<sup>8</sup>

These components under and above water can all be used to improve the quality of education. They are means of improving education quality. The quadrant can help provide an answer to the question of HOW we aim to advance the quality of education.

The summary of the four components shows that the use of quality systems is not the only option. Interventions in professional conduct/behaviour, quality awareness and quality culture are means of improving education quality. The preferred intervention in any particular situation will depend on the challenges at hand and whether or a certain intervention suits the persons concerned. Most education institutions will not implement only one of these components. A quality management system will be the initial choice in many cases. In recent years there has been more focus on the professionalism of teaching and other staff in the education sector with the aim of improving quality. However, the underwater components are still not getting as much attention.

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<sup>7</sup> For example: Naor, M. et al., 2008. The role of culture as drive of quality management and performance: infrastructure versus core quality practices. Decision Science. Quoted by Fellingner and Markowitsch.

<sup>8</sup> For example: Venne, L. van de et al., 2014). *De dagelijkse zorg voor onderwijskwaliteit in het mbo. Bouwstenen voor een aanpak.* ECHO, 's-Hertogenbosch.



### 3 Quality culture

As the fundamental aim of a school is good education, we relate the quality culture to the provision of good education as that is ultimately the core activity of a school (in the car sector, for example, the quality culture is related to the quality of the manufactured cars). Therefore we will first discuss the term education quality and then the term quality culture.

By **education quality** we mean both the product and the process. In vocational education, the *product* is the extent to which the novice professionals demonstrate that, during their study, they did actually acquire skills that they will need in their work, a subsequent line of studies and in society. And the degree to which this results in a diploma. The more successful this is and, moreover, the more satisfied students and customers are, the higher the education quality.

In terms of *process*, 'education quality' refers to the way in which students acquire these skills during their study programme. The procedural quality is considered good if the teachers, supervisors and managers organise, implement and execute the teaching and examination procedures effectively and efficiently. If the pedagogical-didactic climate and learning climate are good. Moreover: if students work are intensively engaged with their studies and enjoy it as well.

We describe **quality culture** within an education institution as: accepted, unified and mostly tacit way in which a group (a team of teachers, a department or the education institution as a whole) strives to deliver quality in its teaching, in terms of both product and process. This concerns the collective values, standards, interpretations and conceptualisations shared by the members of that group with regard to the best approach to good education. Quality culture develops within the collaborative and learning group processes and will usually not be uniform; there will often be a dominant culture and various subcultures.

This description is consistent with Schein's three-layer model<sup>9</sup>: artefacts and behaviour; values; convictions. Schein defines culture as:

'A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.'

Quality of teaching and culture quality do not coincide; they are two distinct phenomena with quality culture constituting the fertile ground on which the education quality can thrive (or not, as the case may be). The quality of the education is the WHAT, the quality culture is the HOW.

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<sup>9</sup> Schein, E.H. (1992). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. Jossey-Bass, Business & management series.

The quality culture does determine how those involved perceive the education quality: do they place more emphasis on the product or the process? On the more tangible results (such as the number of diplomas) or on the qualitative results (such as graduates' professional attitude)?

#### Aside

The relationship between organisational culture, school culture and quality culture is topic of discussion within the European Q-Kult project. How do these cultures differ and where do they overlap? Is it possible to 'isolate' quality culture in such a way that it can be researched empirically as an independent phenomenon?

First of all, the German and Austrian partners in the Q-Kult project looked for scientific substantiation for 'quality culture' based on empirical research already available.

However, it seems that very little research has been conducted into the quality culture of schools in a teaching setting.

For the purpose of this memorandum we will assume that quality culture is part of a wider school culture or organisational culture.

In the Netherlands, we chose to address the conceptual aspects first. We aim to develop a conceptual framework which can be used by education institutions and which will also serve as a point of departure for further research.

## 4 Quality culture and values

A quality culture is not 'neutral'. The quality culture introduces values into a school. We have classified the range of values that can help define the quality culture on the basis of Quinn's competing values framework<sup>10</sup> (see figure 3). They distinguish process-oriented, result-oriented, people-oriented and innovation-oriented values. A quality culture can be coloured in from a whole range of values. There is no such thing as an inherently better or poorer quality culture, but there are different types which will be more suitable depending on the situation or challenge.

### *Process-oriented quality culture* (internal process model)

An institution, department or team that operates in a quality culture dominated by process-oriented values focuses on control and management. They expect that to have a positive impact on the quality of the education. In this kind a quality culture there is a natural willingness to adhere to procedures and regulations, to have information and documentation in order and to manage a collective field of responsibility. The people involved focus on 'hard facts'.

### *Result-oriented quality culture* (rational goal model)

Characteristic for groups who act on the basis of the self-evident truths in this quality culture is a continuous result-orientation and a competitiveness towards other education institutions, departments, teams and employees. There is constant emphasis on results and targets (in such quantitative terms as intake, drop-out rates and diploma results). It is presumed that this will help optimise the quality of the education. Once again, those involved focus on hard facts.

### *People-oriented culture* (human relations model)

In this quality culture, a strong team ethic, an 'us' feeling, is considered an important condition to ensure good education quality. Teamwork is very highly valued from that perspective as a means of achieving quality. Team members aim to bring the best out in each other. The common values and objectives are collectively expressed, re-examined and, if necessary, further developed. The people concerned attach great value to sharing experiences and other qualitative information.

### *Innovation-oriented quality culture* (open system model)

Characteristic for a quality culture dominated by these values are: flexibility, creativity, innovation, being open to the outside world and forward thinking. These values are expressed and demonstrated as strong desirabilities to make an organisation future-proof and to achieve optimum education quality. Those involved focus on qualitative and quantitative data which relate not only to the current situation but, more especially, also to future opportunities.

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<sup>10</sup> Quinn, R.E. et al. (1994). *Handboek managementvaardigheden*. BIM media, Den Haag.

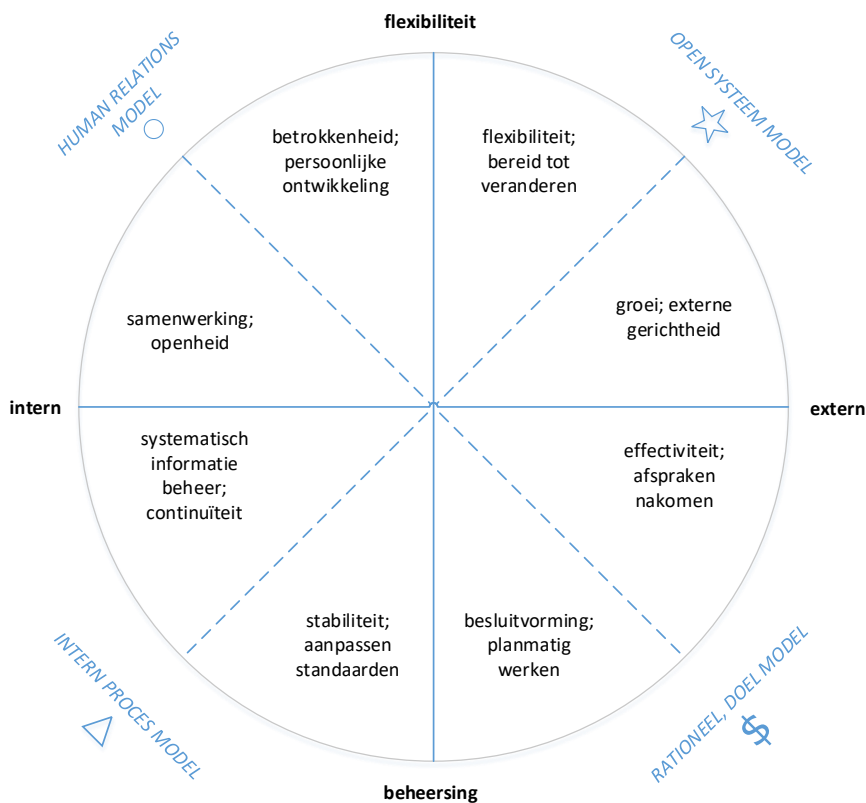


Figure 2: Competing values framework (Quinn et al)

#### Teacher logic and administrator logic

Research (in higher professional education (HBO))<sup>11</sup> reveals that teaching teams that deliver good education quality, from the perspective of the Quinn value framework, perform on a combined basis of people-oriented and innovation-oriented values. In these teams there is mutual collaboration, a good collegial atmosphere, a good atmosphere with the students and the team members are open to criticism. The working styles these lecturers employ are dynamic, they have an external outlook and are perceptive to change. They focus on achieving results and they honour commitments. And, most importantly, this value orientation benefits the effectiveness and quality of their work. Kleijnen suggests that HBO lecturers consider the (competing) process-oriented and result-oriented values as secondary and supporting. This may not be very different for MBO teachers.

This study concludes that, for education quality management to be effective, it is important that the approach be consistent with the teachers' values. However, the researcher claims that teacher logic is often at variance with the logic of managers and

<sup>11</sup> Kleijnen, J., et al.: (2011). *Effectieve Kwaliteitszorg vereist een Kwaliteitscultuur. Een kwalitatief onderzoek naar opvattingen, percepties en waarden van stafdocenten.* ('A qualitative study of the views, perceptions and values of teaching staff') Paper ORD2011.

administrators who tend to focus more on result-oriented and process-oriented values. He suggests that purely implementing a quality management system is consistent with administrator logic but conflicts with teacher logic.

### *Competing values*

While the four values in the Quinn framework may initially appear to exclude each other, for an organisation to perform well it is important that they are reflected adequately to enable response to internal and external challenges. That is why they are referred to as competing values. The values can be competing in the following ways:

- *Process-oriented* (systematic data management; continuity; stability; adaptability to standards)  
These values are typically internally and control-focused. Entirely competitive are the innovative values, because they are both externally and flexibility-focused (top right in fig. 3). The people-oriented and result-oriented values are partially competitive, because they are respectively either flexibility or externally focused.
- *Result-oriented* (effectiveness, honouring commitments, decision making, working methodically)  
These values are typically control and externally focused. Entirely competitive are the people-oriented values, because they are both internally and flexibility-focused (top left in fig. 3). The process-oriented and innovative values are partially competitive, because they are respectively either internally or flexibility focused.
- *People-oriented* (commitment, personal development, collaboration, openness)  
These values are typically internally and flexibility-focused. Entirely competitive are the result-oriented values, because they are both externally and control-focused (bottom right in fig. 3). The innovative and process-oriented values are partially competitive, because they are respectively either externally or control focused.
- *Innovation-oriented* (flexibility, willingness to change, growth, externally focused)  
These values are typically flexible and externally focused. Entirely competitive are the process-oriented values, because they are both internally and control-focused (bottom left in fig. 3). The result-oriented and people-oriented values are partially competitive, because they are respectively either internally or control focused.

Thinking on the basis of this value framework requires the management to be flexible enough to switch between these competing values. Furthermore, it demands a capacity to cope with the tension this can cause; an ability to manage what Quinn calls the 'cultural paradox', which results from the competing values.

In this light, wisely managing the field of tension between teacher logic and administrator logic is a matter of working with competing values.

For example: a strongly people-oriented and innovative quality culture in teacher teams would benefit the quality of education but would oppose too strong a focus on a rigid quality control system. There may be some resistance from the teacher teams against the controlling culture related to quality systems. The competing values stand in each other's way. Administrators and management may opt to remain firmly committed to the process-oriented quality culture, continuing or even enforcing the system-oriented approach.

For the benefit of the teams, however, they may also consider adopting other quality assurance strategies more appropriate to the quality culture of the teams. They may choose to moderate the implementation of institution-wide systems to render the generated data available to the teams in such a way that they can actually use them, or to clearly communicate the importance to the organisation of the availability of institution-wide data, for long-term policy making, for example.

It has been said before: the current approach to quality assurance almost automatically puts the 'system' first. An approach that has become a fixed habit with an equally automatic underlying management focus on a process-oriented quality culture. Breaking that habit is no mean feat. Doing so calls for a clear strategy and clarity about the interventions to be implemented.

We already mentioned the field of tensions between management logic (anchored in more process-oriented and result-oriented values) and teacher logic (fed by the more people-oriented and innovative values). The more quality assurance swings towards teams, the more restricting a one-sided focus on systems and the related process-oriented quality culture may become.

## **5 Developing a team quality portrait**

### **5.1 From portrait to team quality portrait**

In the process of preparing this conceptual framework, the NCP EQAVET sought to describe the types of quality culture. These types can help institutions clarify the prevailing quality culture and thus to enable improvement of the education quality. Above, we have given four exemplary descriptions in the form of portraits.

Each of these portraits combines the three aspects of the conceptual framework set out in this document.

- The quality of education.
- The four components that influence the quality of education.
- The four types of quality culture, each of which is either consistent or competing with the components.

These portraits were then used to further devise the approach which institutions could implement to enhance the quality culture. The insights acquired by the MBO Quality Network Expertise Group (as included in other sections of this publication) were also taken into consideration. This has led the NCP EQAVET to compile a guide to help teaching teams develop their own team quality portrait. Teaching teams are, after all, the key to delivering quality and must themselves fulfil the assignment they have as team of providing good education. In the guide, the ten insights featured in this publication have been translated into concrete interventions for the teaching teams.

In the autumn of 2017 the NCP EQAVET will run several pilots during which teaching teams will develop their own team quality portrait. The results of these pilots will be included in the revised guide. Completion of the final guide is scheduled for December 2017.

### **5.2 Developing a team quality portrait**

The 'team quality portrait guide' will enable teams to define their ambitions to improve the quality of their teaching and gain insight into their quality culture. Developing such a portrait is a process during which team members can focus on their core task as education professional: collectively providing good education. In mutual dialogue, the team defines its vision on education quality and expresses what they are doing well and what could be improved.

The team subsequently examines its own quality culture and considers whether implementing the proposed changes would have an encouraging or a restricting effect. The team identifies any necessary changes to the quality culture that would enable the team to work as effectively as possible to implement the desired educational improvements.

Developing a team quality portrait is a new way of looking at the quality of education. The teams themselves take the lead in this and, under their own direction, can immediately apply the insights they acquire. In that respect, developing a team quality portrait complements the institution's current quality management system.

The team develops the team quality portrait during four meetings. The objective of developing a team quality portrait is:

- To work efficiently and cyclically to improve the education quality;
- To gain and enhance insight into the team's quality culture;
- To strengthen the team's unity, identity and professional scope.

The team quality portrait can be continuously modified: the team is the owner and can modify it periodically as required.

The work is conducted in four consecutive meetings, during which mutual discussion between the team members is key. During these four meetings, the team really takes the time to discuss matters.

The structure of the guide is consistent with the stages in which the team quality portrait is developed, namely:

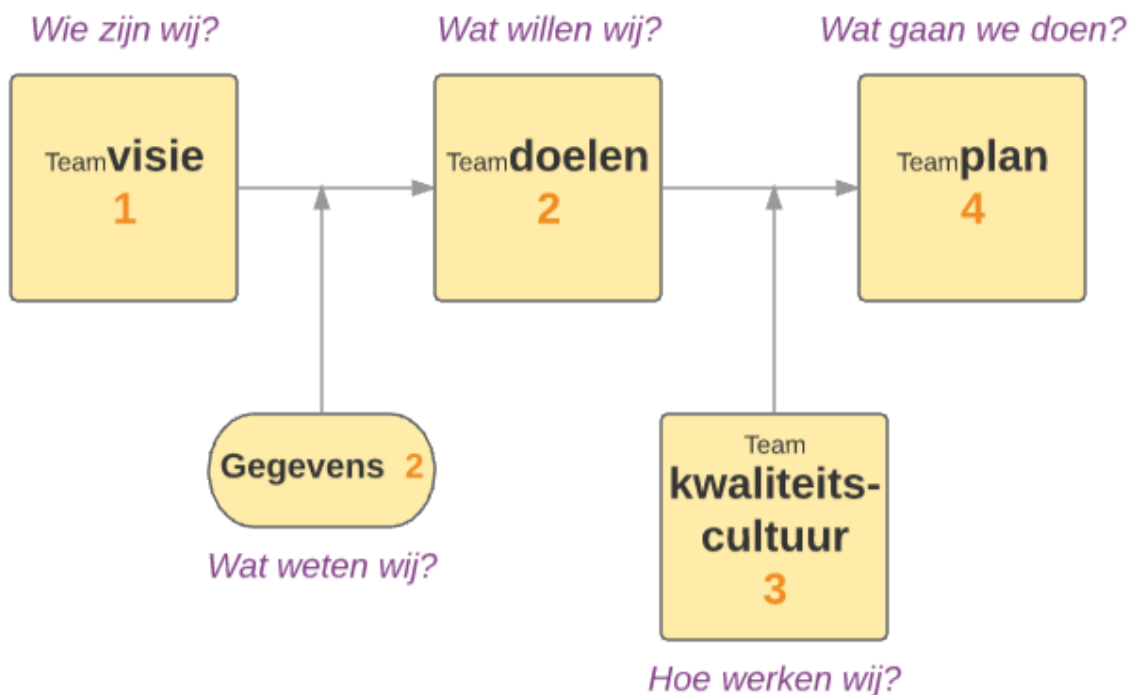
Part 1: Developing the team vision on education quality

Part 2: Prioritising concrete education quality improvements

Part 3: Defining the team's quality culture

Part 4: Translating the Team quality portrait into a concrete action plan

This can be visualised as follows:





### 5.3 Elaboration of team quality portrait components

#### Part 1: Developing the team vision on education quality

**Education quality:** There are two aspects to education quality; a product aspect (the result of the education) and a process aspect (the team approach to education). Education quality is co-defined by external contexts (such as the Inspectorate standards) and the school's internal contexts. Anyone working in education will also have their own (often implicit) vision on what education quality is. A *collective* team vision on education quality can give the team something to steer by in their work; they will know what they are building together and what they can hold each other accountable for. The 'Vision on education quality' scan deals with both the product and the process.

Everyone working in education once had certain motives, often a somewhat idealistic inspiration, such as wanting to educate the next generation of professionals. These motives for working in education help shape teachers' visions on education. For some, that vision is still very much alive after years of working in education; for others it has rather disappeared under the weight of the daily routine. The work of a teacher in a team will become more exciting if they are able to dust off their vision of quality and define a collective vision as team.

The aim of this part of the team quality portrait is for the team members to tell each other what they understand by education quality. Their individual views will lead to an intensive discussion and, ultimately, to a collective view. Based on that holistic view, they will then express the essence of what is close to their hearts, as education professionals, and what they want to be accountable for as team and hold each other mutually accountable for. This can vary tremendously: for one team it might concern the number of diplomas obtained while another team is perhaps more concerned about the relationship between you as teacher/supervisor and your students.

The 'Vision on education quality' scan is used as a discussion aid for everyone's personal vision and the collective visions on education quality, in respect of the desirable situation. The scan is a platform to present the position of the individual team members and of the team as a whole. The scan can help the team to discover whether their vision on education quality focuses more on process control, on result, on innovation or on people, or a combination of all four. By discussing the individual visions, the team will discover the connecting thread of the collective vision.

## **Part 2: Prioritising concrete education quality improvements**

The central question during this meeting is which priorities the team wants to set with regard to enhancing the education quality. Which educational improvement does the team wish to work on as a result of the team vision on education quality? The team will establish a link between the vision on education quality (meeting 1) and the data available from the school system. The team will work in an interactive process, step by step, towards setting priorities. During this meeting there will again be plenty of opportunity for discussion and dialogue between the team members.

## **Part 3: Defining the team's quality culture**

**Quality culture:** This is the self-evident, collective and mostly implicit way in which a team aims to deliver education quality in terms of both product and process. It concerns HOW the team works to enhance the education quality. It concerns the collective values, standards, interpretations and conceptualisations shared by the members of the team on the basis of their experiences, regarding the effective and ineffective ways of doing things.

Quality culture is often invisible; the people working in it are like a goldfish in a bowl, which have no notion that they are swimming in water because that bowl is their entire universe.

During this part, the team takes the next step towards painting their team quality portrait. The team examines what their own quality culture is, which says something about HOW the team is used to working at improving the education quality. The quality culture could perhaps be people-oriented or, conversely, focus more on process control, for example. Once the team acquires more insight into its specific quality culture, the team members can take this into account when taking actions to improve the education and tailor their approach accordingly. They could also modify the quality culture, even if those modifications are minor.

This part of the quality portrait will help raise the team's awareness of its own obvious methods. The team will discover the impact of its quality culture on the education, their way of working and on the collaboration. There will be eye-openers when it becomes clear that, time and again, good intentions do not result in change. The reason could possibly lie in the quality culture. Awareness of that fact could lead to seeking other ways of achieving the desired change; ways which are more consistent with the quality culture of the team.

The 'Quality culture' scan is a means of encouraging team members to discuss the current quality culture, how they each experience that culture, how that culture could perhaps be strengthened, the strengths and weaknesses, and any recurring obstructive patterns. The scan makes the focus of the team's quality culture visible: whether it focuses more on process control, on result, on innovation or on people, or a combination of all four. The discussion will lead, in various intermediate steps, to the question: what does the quality

culture say about HOW the team is used to handling the collective responsibility for the quality of the education?

#### **Part 4: Translating the team quality portrait into a concrete action plan**

We expect that the team vision on education quality and the acquired insight into the team's quality culture will provide a breeding ground where concrete activities and improvement actions can thrive.

So far, the team has taken the following steps:

- WHAT:
  - Defined the team vision on education quality
  - Set improvement priorities on the basis of the vision on education quality and the internal and external data available
- HOW:
  - The team's quality culture has been defined
  - Awareness of the strengths, weaknesses challenges of the team's quality culture

As last step, during this fourth meeting. the team will incorporate all the ingredients into the final team quality portrait and link that to a realistic action plan.

#### **5.4 Follow-up**

The objective of the pilots being conducted in the autumn of 2017 is to examine whether developing a team quality portrait helps education teams to actually achieve the quality goals they set for themselves and whether teams have developed positively in terms of quality-conscious performance as a team.

The results of the pilots will be used to revise the guide. Completion of the final guide is scheduled for December 2017. For the latest information on the team quality portrait guide and the pilots, visit: [www.eqavet.nl](http://www.eqavet.nl).

## 6 Summary and conclusions

In this memorandum, we have developed a conceptual framework to put flesh on the somewhat abstract concept of quality culture. The conceptual framework comprises three elements: education quality, quality improvement components and an elaboration of the quality culture.

We have linked quality culture to the quality of the education in vocational education institutions. When examining quality assurance, education quality itself must not remain a black box. That is why education quality in terms of product and process features prominently in the conceptual framework presented.

Four quality assurance components have been described, namely:

- quality management systems (collective and above water);
- the conduct and professional practice of those involved (individual and above water);
- quality awareness (individual and below water);
- quality culture (collective and below water);

All too often, the only aspect considered in relation to education quality is quality management systems. The function of these systems is certainly important, but they are not the only component. There are even signs that the results of quality management have only a slight impact the quality of education.

The grid presented here can help avoid the potential pitfall of automatically focusing on that one component. However, the current interest in quality culture is just as much at risk of becoming too one-sided.

When determining and implementing interventions, it is recommended to take into consideration and respond to the current, dominant quality culture. That is easiest if the component and quality culture are consistent. If the current culture is competitive in respect of a component, the resulting cultural paradox should be addressed judiciously.

During the meetings linked to the development of the team quality portrait, the interventions which best suit the team concerned and the situation the team is currently in, will also be considered. We expect quality culture interventions to contribute to the quality of the education in the following way:

- Quality culture interventions can influence quality management systems, professional conduct and individual quality awareness. Responding to the current quality culture can contribute to improved performance of these components. In this way, quality culture can indirectly influence the quality of the education.
- Quality culture interventions can also influence education quality and school performance directly. This entails a transition of quality culture to directly achieve better education. Such as by enhancing the innovative culture to make the education more future-focused.

With the increasing focus in vocational education on teams and their ownership of education quality we may see the wish for a shift in quality culture, from a one-sided

focus on the process-oriented/result-oriented quality culture to a more people-oriented/innovative quality culture. This will enable a board to incorporate the way in which teachers, in teams, aim to optimise the quality of the education.

We look forward to the results of the pilots with teaching teams and will keep you informed via our website and the site ([www.eqavet.nl](http://www.eqavet.nl)).

In 2018, the NCP EQAVET will continue its work on this theme and the constructive collaboration with the MBO Quality Network, the MBO Council, NRTO, BVMBO, JOB, AOb and SBB. To be continued.