

## **Draft report PLA on enhancing quality culture**

October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 2017

The Dutch NRP EQAVET organised a peer learning activity on enhancing quality culture as part of the European Call for NRP's that was commissioned by the European Committee. The Dutch NRP EQAVET believes in the power of sharing insights that each of us gained in our own respective countries and to enrich and add to these insights. This is not necessarily aimed at establishing a shared definition on what a quality culture school be, but rather seeks to gather the various insights into what can be done to enhance the quality culture with regard to actually delivering quality.

Colleagues from Estonia, Sweden, Croatia, Ireland, Norway and the EQAVET secretariat have exchanged and discussed ideas with Dutch colleagues about how to enhance quality culture. Special attention was given to the review phase of the quality cycle and the use of feedback of students and graduated students to improve quality (linked to EQAVET indicator 4, 5 and 6). In this report more information is presented on this PLA, the results and the lessons learned.

### **Program**

The first day of the visit has taken place at ROC van Twente (a VET provider in the eastern part of the Netherlands). After the welcoming words of Thea van den Boom from the Dutch Ministry of Education the participants were introduced in the work of ROC van Twente by Trudy Vos of the board of ROC van Twente. Bert Imminga, the quality manager of ROC van Twente, presented the way this VET provider is working on quality, quality assurance and enhancing quality culture. His presentation was the starting point for discussions between the participants on the work on Q, QA and enhancing Q culture in the different member states. The Dutch NRP EQAVET presented the background paper and introduced the key questions the PLA should provide an answer to.

After an interesting tour around the building of ROC van Twente after lunch to get a closer look at how VET student are educated, the participants started small groups sessions where they had the opportunity to talk to students, teachers and managers and staff of the school. Unfortunately the Dutch Inspectorate could not make it to the PLA because of other priorities that raised a few days before the PLA. The participants were glad to be able to talk to them and find out more on how working on improve the quality of VET provision works in practice. There was enough space for discussions with each other to be able to find answers to the key questions of the PLA.

In the evening we had dinner in a restaurant in Amersfoort. In a good atmosphere with nice food we continued our talks on Q of VET and other issues. The NRP EQAVET did not organise it beforehand but we were even served by a VET student and he was performing well!

The second day we continued are discussions in Amersfoort and were working in small groups on formulating answers to the key questions. We finished our work in Amersfoort with formulating conclusions and lessons learned. Before lunch we drove to Utrecht were the Dutch Quality Network of VET providers organised their yearly conference on quality and quality assurance. The conference was organised at the Dutch Railway Museum and around 250 participants from VET providers and stakeholders in the Netherlands could learn from each other in two rounds of workshops. One of the workshops was organised by the Dutch NRP EQAVET and the European

colleagues were contributing to this. Dutch colleagues learned from the experiences of the participants of the PLA and vice versa. After this workshop we ended the PLA. The participants concluded that they had learned a lot on enhancing Q culture and all the issues involved in this. Especially the contact with students and teachers and the discussions with each other were considered as very inspiring and highly valued.

### **Background**

In the Netherlands, we have already observed that VET providers have implemented their quality cycles, but that it has proven difficult to complete those cycles at all the different levels. In 2012 we finished the so called NLQAVET project ([www.nlqavet.nl](http://www.nlqavet.nl)) in which we took various quality assurance systems and connected them with implementations that aim to create a lasting improvement to the quality of VET. Enhancing the quality culture within VET providers is key in this respect and essential for a focus on continuous improvement. It is a culture in which teachers, managers and staff are able to learn and to develop in order to improve the quality of education. To be able to improve the education it is important to give and receive feedback. Especially from stakeholders, like students and graduated students. The Dutch NRP EQAVET worked together with the Dutch Quality Network of VET providers on this and published 10 insights on enhancing quality culture based on research and experiences in the Netherlands. This publication was launched at the conference on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2017 and the English translation of relevant parts of this publication is available now.

### **Working on improving Q, QA and enhancing Q culture at ROC van Twente: introduction**

ROC van Twente is a VET provider in the eastern part of the Netherlands. For the region Twente this provider is an important organisation in educating around 18.500 VET students and they work closely together with the enterprises, local and regional municipalities, the University of Twente and schools for higher VET and secondary education (pre vet). ROC van Twente has 2000 members of staff and works together with 12.000 internship companies. ROC van Twente also provides education for 2000 adults and refugees.

In the Netherlands VET programmes consist of a combination of learning at school and learning at the workplace and last between 1 and 3 years. There are national set Q standards for VET provision but schools are autonomous and make their own choices in designing the programmes. They have to meet the national set of units of learning outcomes and have to meet a minimum amount of hours of training and education. At ROC van Twente they work in 11 different colleges that all provide programmes in a specific branche (for example ICT and healthcare). ROC van Twente has main locations in three cities (Enschede, Almelo and Hengelo) and several small locations in the region. The PLA visited the location in Hengelo (a former building of Stork, a big company in metalworks). At this VET provider the colleges can make their own choices in designing the programmes but there are financial and organizational rules they have to meet.

ROC van Twente works in 80 teams of teachers. Teams arrange dialogues with students and enterprises to talk about (re)designing, evaluating and reviewing the programmes. The teams of teachers are setting the goals for improvement themselves and use the available information of student, enterprises and internal and external audits. There are differences in the performance of teams in doing this and the support needed for this from staff or management. ROC van Twente is working on strengthening of the ownership of teams for continuous working on quality.

ROC van Twente has a quality manager at provider level and college level. The Q managers meet every month to work together on strengthening the system of Q management and Q support for teams and to exchange ideas and learn from each other. There is a Q managementsystem at place that gives information on the performance of colleges and teams on a set of themes. At a monthly basis the board monitors the performance of the teams with the manager of the colleges.

In the Netherlands the Dutch inspectorate reviews the Q of the performance of the VET provider every 4 years. They select a set of VET programmes they are going to look into in more detail for their investigation. The inspectorate does her research based on (self) assessments the VET providers sends to them beforehand and visiting the VET provider. During the visits they meet and talk to students, teachers, staff and board.

The VET provider has to arrange for their internal review of the programmes and they are obliged to involve stakeholders and external experts in this. ROC van Twente has the policy that every team has to assess themselves every year and every team is internally reviewed every 3 of 4 years. Before the summer of 2017 the inspectorate visited ROC van Twente and every college and team is obliged by the board to look into the results of this external review and find out what they can learn from this. When there are risks pointed out, then the colleges have to find out if those risks can also be present in their teams. In this way ROC van Twente uses the results of the external review for setting out the goals for improvement at the level of colleges and teams. ROC van Twente has started last year with teams reviewing each other on a voluntary basis. These peer reviews have the focus on learning from each other and the first results are positive.

### **Working on improving Q, QA and enhancing Q culture at ROC van Twente: results of the small group discussions with students, teachers and staff**

In the afternoon the participants were invited to talk to students, teachers and staff of ROC van Twente to learn more on how working on Q, QA and enhancing Q culture works in practice from their perspective. The results (see also *attachment 1 – Results of the discussions*) of these small group discussions were:

- Arrange for talks with students and teachers. In discussions on improving Q of provision there is a lot of talking going on about students and teachers and what they should do; we tend to forget to ask and talk to them and that can be very helpful in making progress.
- Students, teachers, manager and specialized QA staff have different perspectives on Q, QA and enhancing Q culture and it is good to get to share the way they look upon these issues and move on from here. This can be done in more formal meetings and with questionnaires but it is also good to get to know everyone's views in a more informal way.
- Use the language of teachers and student. We tend to use difficult words that don't always inspire and stimulate them to work on further improvement.
- Be aware of the competences needed by teachers and staff on Q and QA to be able to give their share in the work needed on improving Q of provision and arrange for activities that helps develop these competences.
- Stimulate asking for feedback and use this feedback to get better provision on all levels of the VET provider. Don't be afraid of feedback of students, teachers and colleagues but promote this to learn and become better in what you are doing. Board and managers of teams should give the good example in this and have to arrange for a safe and open environment to do so. It

should be allowed to make mistakes and be open to each other because that helps to improve the Q of provision.

- Arrange for moments of reflection on Q of provision and setting goals for further improvement. Teams of teachers together with managers and specialized staff should work together on this (all with their different responsibilities and views) and should develop their competences on doing this so they become better and better in this.

After these inspiring discussions we drove back to Amersfoort. During dinner we continued with learning from each other on issues related to Q of VET-provision in an informal and pleasant setting.

### **Start of second day**

After a good night rest we continued the PLA with discussing what we learned from the first day. We shared the following insights:

- Quality is not a system, it is the concrete things that happen between the teachers and students.
- Quality development needs time. Management should have good ideas about how to make the system run and how to realize the Q level that we like to achieve.
- The view of the student and teachers is different. They have a different view on the same thing. They have different words. We should be aware of using difficult quality management words.
- Different groups in the quality management have a different perspective but all need 3 things: trust, communication and transparency. We can put more effort in making clear why we do things in the work on raising Q and QA and the relevance of it for different stakeholders. If this is arranged for than this helps the process of enhancing quality culture.
- See the change that is needed take place. Communicate what already has been realised or at least what is being done. Students have a very short time line. The management looks at things in a long run. For students it can be frustrating if they don't see the changes.
- Awareness of Q and QA is needed on all levels of VET and activities should be organised that help raising awareness.
- The main task of the manager is to arrange for the conditions and make the cycle complete. Make it meaningful for the teachers.
- There should be a balance between soft and hard controls. A good mix between hard data and using questionnaires and bench marks and dialogues between students and teachers on Q and the next steps needed using the available data.
- There should be more focus on developing and evolving and using information on Q in this.

Baring these results in mind we started with small group discussions to work on answering the key question of this PLA: how to enhance Q culture to be able to complete the cycle to improve education? In the plenary recap of the results we shared the following insights on VET provider level (see also *attachment 2 – Key questions*):

- It is good to follow a bottom up strategy.
- Start from the perspective of the teachers.

- Bring together all stakeholders and work in close cooperation with stakeholders. Try to work on common agreement.
- Find a pilot and start from there.
- Focus on appropriate communication, so that all people understand why and how we are going to do it. This helps in involving them in setting up and realizing the appropriate actions.
- Teams of teachers should take ownership: they should establish their own goals and work on realizing them. Work with concrete goals that focus on improving Q at the level of interaction between students and teachers.
- Management and staff should provide for the conditions for teachers to execute the actions set and be supportive and stimulating in the process of acting.
- Collect information (hard and soft data) on the (interim) results in the evaluation phase and use them to improve.

At national level we shared the following insights:

- It is good to arrange for peer learning activities between VET providers to exchange experiences and lessons learned and make discussions possible.
- Peer review between teachers and staff of VET providers can help to learn more from each other.

In discussing this a new question arised on how to train teachers in setting up and executing action plans.

### **Lesson learned overall**

We ended the PLA with sharing the lessons learned:

- Keep it short and simple (KISS).
- The quality culture is important. You need to work together with schools, teachers, managers before implementing, during the implementing, so from the start. Make sure that all people understand why it is important. Bottom-up approach.
- There is always culture, it can be weak or strong, in a weak culture all people stand alone, doing their best, in a strong culture people work together on improving the Q of education and are using the available data in this.
- Train your brain, to understand the different system, to understand what others mean.
- Enhancing Q culture is about doing, showing, acting and about communication, talking, discussion.
- Speak with the stakeholders, students, enterprises, teachers.
- Let teachers think themselves. We need to provide supportive conditions. So they can think themselves.
- Teachers need the same as the students. They need the same from the managers. It is the same on different levels.
- Enhancing Q culture needs time. You cannot implement culture, you can implement systems. You need time to know how to work with the systems. Then it will become the culture. Culture is all about acting and doing.
- It needs to be inclusive on everybody. Trust!
- It has to be anchored.

- Quality managers need special skills and that includes social skills.
- It is nice to find out that we share the problems.

After sharing these lessons learned we finished our meeting in PLA and drove to the venue of the national conference on Q of the Dutch Q network in Utrecht. In a workshop Dutch colleagues could share insights on Q, QA and enhancing Q culture with the participants of the PLA. It was good to find out that the challenges are similar in member states even though we have different VET systems and ways of working on Q, QA and enhancing Q culture.

During the conference the publication on enhancing Q culture in VET was presented and it was good to see that the 10 insights that are in this publication match the summary of lessons learned of the participants of the PLA. We finished the workshop by showing the next steps in the work of the Dutch NRP EQAVET in enhancing Q culture. We will finish pilots on working with the so called drawing and working according to the quality portrait of teams of teachers. In this work we are promoting that teams have to let think themselves on what is needed for their education to improve. Look upon the quality that you like to deliver and connect it to to how you are doing now based on the available data. The team is then setting the goals for the near future and thinking on how to reach that goals. The team is looking into the way they are now used to working and what this means for the next steps. By the end of 2017 we hope to finalize and publish the guidance materials on the team quality portrait.

### **Recommendations**

We finished the PLA with the following recommendations for next steps:

- It is good to communicate the added value of meetings like this PLA and promote organizing PLA's in member states and on European level.
- It is good to consider the added value of incorporating talks with students and teachers in the programme of next meetings on Q, QA and enhancing Q culture or organizing meeting at the venue of VET providers.
- We should be aware to talk with students and teachers instead of only talking about them.
- Take into consideration that improving Q takes time.
- Enhancing Q culture to complete the Q cycle is about doing and acting by all the stakeholders involved.

See for the results of the questionnaire attachment 3 – *Results evaluation*

## Attachment 1 - Results of the discussions

### STAFF

- Quality cycle as a management tool → for managers.
- Teachers need to feel that they are part of the process.
- Teachers as part of the activity plan (communication & trust)
- Sync of the quality cycle among the different teams/parts.
- Giving structure to the cycle → teams meet after a given period of time to review, plan, decide, evaluate.
- Being transparent → perception of authenticity.
- Teachers' workload vs a working quality cycle. Teachers need to feel that this is important.
- Thinking of teachers as professionals.
- Resistance against constant change.
- Being open for feedback, essential for the team, teachers and managers.
- Keeping the autonomy of the teachers in the classroom while getting them as a part of the team.
- Peer evaluations among teachers & evaluations from students about their teachers.

### STAFF

- Where does the 'inspectorate' fit into the quality cycle.
- Inspectorate is reporting on the entire Q cycle and asks question connected to the team activity plan (tap)

Signals 'tap' • Evaluations form students  
• Movement in industry

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-  
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Systematic gathering & evaluation of data

Staff expected to analyse data and suggest actions forward

- Face to face feedback vs digital feedback from learners. Also feedback from companies and industry
- After making changes, ask same question again expect different results

Every teacher is a coach also (informal process)

Teachers carry out 5 evaluations rounds each year.

Teachers do not need to share this information ➡ trade union transparency 80/20 ➡ student council will.

Personal 'Plan - Do - Check - Cycle'.

Quality driven organisation [statement]



You should want to be evaluated

360° evaluation 'personal development'

'Must feel safe in your team/supported'

- Competency - giving feedback - good - positively

## **MANAGERS**

What do they need? (to fulfil the role)

- Not too many control systems (trust)
- Time to organize moments for reflection
- Common goals

What competencies do they need?

- Be authentic
- Empathy
- Open minded
- Respect professionals (ability to)
- Willing to investigate
- Facilitating

How can they improve?

- Share
- Be a good example and appreciate feedback



## **Students**

### 1. What do they need

- National VET student union -> questionnaire
- Student union of the school
- Student union of the department
- Student – teacher – teacher – peer to peer feedback

Culture of trust, acceptance, respect

### 2. Competences

- Quality management
- Giving feedback
- Communication
- Be critical

### 3. Networking

Supporting

Communication training

## Attachment 2 – Key questions

### Planning

- In what way do teachers contribute to the establishment of goals?

### Implementation:

- In what way do teachers contribute to the implementation of remedial or other actions?
- In what way does the staff (i.e. management and specialised policy officers) contribute to the implementation of remedial or other actions?



### Review:

- In what way do teachers contribute to the utilisation of the gathered information in drafting and implementing improvement proposals?
- In what way does the staff contribute to the utilisation of the gathered information in drafting and implementing improvement proposals?
- In what way do students contribute to the deliberation on improvement proposals?
- In what way do graduates contribute to the deliberation on improvement proposals?

### Evaluation:

- What information is gathered about the quality of education?
- What connection is there between the quality of the gathered information and how it is used by teachers?

## Answering the questions

### How to enhance quality culture to be able to complete the cycle to improve education?

Quality cycle	What activities should be undertaken?	Who should do that?	Who should be involved in what?
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organise training sessions for: Staff Teachers</li> </ul> Professional development on QA Framework Professionalization on these competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Feedback</li> <li>* Teambuilding</li> <li>* Communication</li> <li>* goal setting</li> <li>* Research/ risk</li> </ul> analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team set up-</li> </ul> With goals identified by the team	System Senior management         Senior management	System Senior management         Every one (teacher, staff, student and specialized staff)
Implementing	Quality time Resources A way that stimulate	System Senior management	Senior management Every one (teacher, staff, student and specialized staff)
Evaluation	<i>Hard evidence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of meetings</li> <li>- Goal set</li> <li>- Framework competences</li> </ul> <i>Soft evidence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicating effectivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Management</li> <li>- Self-evaluation</li> </ul>	Senior management Every one (teacher, staff, student and specialized staff)
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflection</li> <li>- Plan for second round of training</li> <li>- Team identification; inclusion of social partners</li> </ul>		

Quality cycle	What activities should be undertaken?	Who should do that?	Who should be involved in what?
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Action plan/strategy / activity plan at the national level about to approach quality culture including all stakeholders</li> <li>- Bottom-up strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Agency for education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers</li> <li>- Staff</li> <li>- VET-institutions</li> <li>- Sector national councils (incl unions)</li> <li>- Students</li> </ul>
Implementing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection of pilots across the country (good practices)</li> <li>- Through workshops with stakeholders assure the correct implementation and further engagement of all parts in the process. Finding synergies with on-going projects</li> <li>- Dissemination/ communication of the implementation of the process to the general public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working groups with representatives from all stakeholders and from the department of education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Same as before</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gathering of information: questionnaires, interviews, webinars, workshops</li> <li>- Have all stakeholders achieved the goals in the pilot? How does the result help their work?</li> </ul>	Coordinator: National Agency in conjunction with working groups	National Agency + stakeholders
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning what have worked well</li> <li>- Finding out what can be improved</li> <li>- Listening to all stakeholders</li> <li>- Identifying quality developers among stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p>Same</p> <p>The National Agency acts as a main responsible actor/coordinator that gives support to all stakeholders in the different phases of the quality cycle</p>	Same

Quality cycle	What activities should be undertaken?	Who should do that?	Who should be involved in what?
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informing the teachers</li> <li>- Involving and asking teachers about their needs / agreeing about action plan</li> </ul>	Managers, staff, teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Professionalization of teachers (how to gather data, how to analyse)</li> </ul>
Implementing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supporting teachers in implementing action plan</li> <li>- building conditions for action plan to be successful</li> <li>- formalise</li> </ul>	Managers	
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- supervision</li> <li>- feedback</li> <li>- soft monitoring</li> </ul>		
Review			

PLA studies together – let people think about the topics  
PEER REVIEW

## Attachment 3 - Results evaluation

PLA on enhancing quality culture in VET

Organised by the Dutch NRP EQAVET on October 4th and 5th 2017

The Dutch NRP EQAVET conducted a digital survey to evaluate the PLA some weeks after the PLA had finished. The survey was sent to 9 persons and 6 participants answered all the 18 questions (response rate 67 %).

### Results

The participants are all positive on the information that was handed over before the start of the PLA. Especially the information on the overall aim, the programme and the background paper was valued as appropriate. The venues of the PLA were fit for purpose; the participants were very positive of the venue of ROC van Twente that we visited on the first day.

The participants all agree that the programme was helpful in realising the aim of the PLA and are very positive on the presentation by representatives on the way ROC van Twente is working on Q, QA and enhancing Q culture. In the programme was much space for dialogues with students, teachers and staff of ROC van Twente and discussions with each other connected to the key questions of the PLA; in the evaluation this was valued positive. On the second day the participants were part of a workshop on sharing experiences with Dutch colleagues; these talks with colleagues was highly valued.

The participants have highly valued the participation of colleagues from other member states and the support and guidance of the Dutch NRP EQAVET. They all say that the lessons learned are helping them in their further work on Q, QA and enhancing Q culture back home and their own professional development.

### Recommendations

The last question of the survey was about the recommendations for the European EQAVET network.

The participants recommend the following:

- organise more PLA's like this, in different countries. It is important to learn from each other (*pointed out by several participants*)
- involve students and enterprises in PLA's
- establish discussion groups with representatives as part of the PLA to continue with sharing knowledge