

## The big data journey of discovery 2020

### A pilot promoting the use of data by teaching teams

**Numerous data are available in the VET sector that can provide information on the quality of education, such as the Work Placement Monitor ('BPV Monitor'), the JOB monitor and various data at the institution level. It is becoming more important for teaching teams to be able to interpret and use these data themselves, because the responsibility for safeguarding the quality cycle is increasingly shifting from the Education Inspectorate to the teaching teams. However, teaching teams regularly find that using these data to improve their teaching presents a stumbling block. They find it difficult to translate information from external data sources, internal quality assurance systems and evaluations into actions that contribute to improving educational quality (Oberon; KBA, 2015).[1].**

In the context of teaching, data refers to all relevant quantitative and qualitative data that teachers and school leaders need to make decisions, such as test results, background information, structured observation data or assessment data (Lai & Schildkamp, 2013).[2]. Data can therefore be used as input for a discussion about the quality of education with various stakeholders to substantiate certain 'gut feelings' or to define improvement actions. Data can also show where quality meets the required standard, what a teaching team can be proud of and what, above all, should be maintained.

The challenge would seem to lie in finding a way to use the information derived from various data collectively, within teaching teams, and translating the data into concrete actions. The big question is: 'How can the use of data to improve the quality of education be incorporated into teaching teams' tasks and be adopted in a manner they enjoy?'

The NCP EQAVET launched a pilot in autumn 2019 to support core teams within teaching teams in promoting the use of data to improve educational quality in VET. The aim of the pilot was to obtain insight into the manner in which teaching teams can find out that using data in VET can be useful and perhaps even enjoyable and what tools they need to be able to do this adequately. The result of this pilot is the data use training kit, which contains PowerPoint presentations for three sessions and a handbook for a process supervisor to supervise a teaching team, including different working methods and theoretical background information.

The pilot began in November with two different core groups from the Dutch vocational training institute Curio: the quality assurance experts from Curio Techniek en Technologie, who are in charge of several teaching teams, and the quality core group from Curio Retail in Roosendaal. The NCP EQAVET supervised both core groups, demonstrating how to complete this process using the data use training kit with a focus on utilising data in their teaching teams.

We based the pilot on three sessions, in which teaching teams were taken through the process of using data related to an issue facing the team. The sessions took the teaching team through six steps, which were discussed during three sessions as follows:

### First session:

1. obtaining clarity on the question;
2. gathering relevant data.

### Second session:

3. analysing the data;
4. interpreting the data;
5. making decisions or implementing actions to improve education.

### Third session:

6. evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken.

We completed the pilot project in April 2020 and collected the opinions of the core teams involved on how they found the process. Some participants found the pilot a welcome support in effectively dealing with current issues with their teaching team. One of the participants said, 'The awareness that gradually arose really helped me; don't focus too much on working towards a certain result, but try to connect things objectively.' Other participants are afraid that there will hardly be any support within their team for completing such a process outside the pilot. One argument put forward was the time investment that such a process would require. Given that the pilot showed that time investment is indeed essential, the time needed for sessions has been increased in the handbook, where necessary, and it would be advisable to reserve the necessary time within the teaching team. This will provide a realistic picture of the time needed in advance of the process.

Differences between the teaching teams were noticeable when they used the material developed by NCP EQAVET and when they were taken through the steps. For some teams, it proved difficult not to go straight to the solution. For a number of other teams, the step from analysing the data to interpreting the results was complicated. It is not the ability to execute each step right down to the last detail that is important, but rather the discussion that arises and the entire teaching team's involvement in systematically working on educational quality. The major gains lie mainly in the team becoming familiar with and practising the steps, and the underlying thoughts, which will lead to greater team responsibility and awareness of the role that teaching teams can play in working on the quality of education.

Most of the teaching teams that participated in the pilot have taken steps or are still in the process of doing so due to the COVID-19 situation. A good result achieved by one of the teaching teams involved is that the pilot has made them more aware of the importance of using data to improve educational quality. The teaching team can now carry out the steps that were completed during the pilot, without a process supervisor. In addition, three key points emerged during the evaluation:

- 1 The train-the-trainer principle works well within the process. Those who will be assigned to supervise a teaching team during this process will benefit from receiving the data use training kit and using the manual to prepare for the sessions.
- 2 Supervising a core or teaching team during the sessions can be exciting. You should therefore regard it as a journey of discovery that you will be undertaking together.

- 3 The conscious use of data requires time, effort and a degree of urgency and priority that is supported by the team. It is important that the effort is facilitated and appreciated. This will become second nature in due course, and you will find routine in the approach.

All materials from the data use training kit use are available on the NCP EQAVET's website. If you have any questions, please contact the NCP EQAVET, [eqavet@cinop.nl](mailto:eqavet@cinop.nl).

[1] Oberon; KBA. (2015). Informatiegebruik voor kwaliteitsverbetering [Information use for quality improvement]. Utrecht/Nijmegen: Oberon; KBA.

[2] Lai, M. K., & Schildkamp, K. (2013). Evidence-based decision making. An overview. *Studies in educational leadership*; Vol. 17, No. 17, 9–21.