Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci

REFLECTIVE QUALITY DEVELOPMENT FOR CVT TEACHERS AND TRAINERS THROUGH SELF-EVALUATION

REFLECTIVE EVALUATION

FIRST COUNTRY REPORT

(DENMARK)

DEL
DANMARKS ERHVERVSPÆDAGOGISKE LÆRERUDDANNELSE

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1   Overview

1.1   Role of Quality Management

During the last years more demands, in line with a more outcome oriented management and connected with introduction of "give and take" principles, have been raised to the institutions concerning quality management and specifically within areas which have political attention: reduction of drop outs in the system, increased retention, strengthening of development initiatives, more internationalisation and integration of ICT in teaching.

In addition the present concept for quality management first and foremost aims at creating an appropriate framework for the individual boards of the institutions within the different areas and respecting the need for priorities and solutions responding to local needs and possibilities.

1.2   Role of Quality Management in the Educational Sector

The concept of quality is both manifold and dynamic. The assessment of what to label as "good quality" is both linked to the general political objectives, which obviously are constantly changing and more specifically to the nature and aims of the individual education programme. Thus is in addition subject to changes in the course of time and in response to changes in demands from society. Finally the perception of good quality is depending on available resources.

The focus on quality has been high on the Danish political agenda during the last 10 years seen both from a centralised and decentralised perspective. It is in this respect characteristic for the Danish system that the quality concept hasn't been classified by general definitions but rather encircled by indicators and approaches to maintain and develop quality.

Hence a modern quality concept includes both the process and outcome. Quality in the process depends in the narrowest sense the specific targets for the education while a more broad quality concept also embrace the outcome of the process including the fulfilling of the general objectives for the education.

Even if it isn't possible or desirable to identify and authorise one general quality concept there is a need to identify good quality in the individual learning and education situations. In the daily operations assessment of the education processes are conducted on an ongoing basis and additionally reviews of the outcomes based on a quality concept outlined locally by the involved   stakeholders.

In Denmark, there is and has never been a single, nation wide, quality approach but common principles and measures at system level.

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Key factors in the Danish perception of quality in the educational system:

The quality of the general and pedagogical management

Quality assurance mechanisms taking in the teachers and students

The pedagogical and didactical approach and the collaboration between teacher and student

Inputs- resources – competences – standard of premises – facilities

Professional and social environment in the institution is the fundament and source and prerequisite for quality maintenance and development.

The above mentioned elements will always operate in an interplay, in which it can be difficult to discern the impact on quality from one single element. In addition the elements can substitute or compensate for one another.

Hence the whole issue on impact on quality from different elements is a complex one, and quality is closely linked to a specific professional and political context. General causal relations from which quality can be calculated or predicted have never been documented. The educational system is not a machine which unequivocally can be regulated with different handles and equipped with inputs which in specific situations for certain will lead to specified outcomes with a predicted effect. There is of course a correlation, but not necessarily proportionality, between inputs and outputs and there isn't a general and fixed predictability about the effect from a specific effort.

The Danish Ministry of Education has defined nine common principles/measures concerning the policy on quality issues:

The involvement of stakeholders

Common national guidelines

Output monitoring

Quality rules

Ministerial approval, monitoring and inspections

Testing and examination

Transparency and openness

Evaluations by the Danish Evaluation Institute

International co-operation and surveys.

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1.3   Cultural and System-Related Perception of Quality Management

1.3.1 Cultural and System-Related Perception of Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance is – in the Danish context - considered as an important tool for maintaining quality in education and training and is in general considered as question of interplay between the central level as producer of framework and requirements and the local level, where institutions can choose and form their concept of QA respecting the national framework.

1.3.2 Cultural and System-Related Perception of Self-Evaluation

In the Danish context Self-evaluation is considered as a quite important way to involve and engage institutions and teachers in the process of developing schools and pedagogical practice. Self-evaluation is as such an integrated part of many QA-activities.

1.3.3 Cultural and System-Related Perception of Self-Empowerment

Self-empowerment as idea is not (yet) very much established in the Danish context, but is in the move forward.

2   Survey

2.1   Cultural and System-Related Requirements for Self-Evaluation in Further Education and Training

In the Danish context there is a growing need for tools and concepts related to Self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is – as mentioned above – considered as an important way to improve and develop education and training and teachers and trainers are often encouraged to use this method to improve their practice and their team-work

2.2   Perception of Quality Concept

2.2.1   View of Practitioners

The Practitioners in general consider Quality as a question of high quality in teacher competencies and the possibility to practise and develop the evaluation-dialog between teachers and students. The Danish tradition is clearly influenced by an autonomous way of thinking: schools and teachers want to plan and form their own way of Quality-thinking and are often sceptical towards national standards or recommendations.

2.2.2   View of Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

See below – 2.3.2 and 2.5.2

2.2.3   View of Experts

Danish experts are – in various ways – involved in the discussion of Quality Assurance and are often used as consultants in the educational system. About 10 years ago The National Centre for evaluation was set up in Denmark, and this Centre is leading in the national discussions about Quality and evaluation.

In 2.5.2 some general principles concerning quality assurance and evaluation from the Centre is presented.

2.3   Criteria for Quality Assurance

2.3.1   View of Practitioners

The practitioners consider the construction of meaningful criteria as crucial for the work with QA. The practitioners are in general focused on criteria related to teachers competences and the way the evaluation dialog between teachers and students can be handled and are preoccupied by the view, that these criteria should be constructed at the local level, that means by the school it self.

2.3.2   View of Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

The use of specific QAS.

Four VET schools have been interviewed concerning their making use of quality assurance systems.

Only one of the four schools that were interviewed make use of a specific QAS and more precise the so called KVIK QA system which is the light version of the Excellence, EFQM system.

This is in full compliance with the findings in a recent published survey. It documents that the majority of the VET schools have decided to develop their own systematic approach. This applies for more than two thirds of the schools (70%). Many schools have decided to blend and combine different approaches.

Only 18% of the schools have decided to develop their own system without getting inspiration/inputs from standard systems. 42% of the schools which have decided to take inspiration from standard systems have chosen to make use of EFQM or EFQM related models as a point of departure for their QA activities, while relatively few schools (5%) male use of ISO or other certification models.

The report draws the tentative and cautious conclusion that you can trace a trend towards leaving the ISO and instead applying to the EFQM.[1]

The general perception/approach applied to, including the school which uses the KVIK system, is that you the institutions fully recognise that their Quality Assurance Systems shall be in line with what is centrally required as mandatory or minimum requirements in DK, as outlined in the next sub-section.

The Ministry of Education has set up the mandatory regulations that the quality system of the schools as a minimum must document the following areas:

1. The provision of education and subjects, 2. The vision/mission/objectives for the provider, 3. Public access to the average of the examination marks of the students, 4. Evaluation of the education delivered by the institution and 5. Environmental surveys.

1. **The provision of education and subjects.**

   This is simply an in depth description of the whole education and the subjects included in it and had as such nothing to do with quality systems.

2. **Vision/mission/values**

   Very broad and development oriented goals for the institution – management and staff: like the principles of openness - respect – quality (on a broad scale) – pedagogical foundation

3. **Public access to examination marks.**

   It is for the IVET provider as for all other training institutions obligatory to publish the average marks for the whole education and the individual subjects. This can of course be seen as instruments for benchmarking.

   Besides the access to examination marks some providers publish student and employers evaluation of the whole education, individual subjects and specific courses.

4. **Environmental surveys.**

   Some providers have conducted surveys on student perceptions of environmental issues. Topics in this kind of user satisfaction measurement are: general perception of institution performance, physical and esthetical environment, teacher competences etc.

The schools that were interviewed emphasised that it is up to them to decide what system or concept to make use of or use as a starting point for their QA. They decide e.g. whether to develop their own systematic or choose one of the standards concepts, which are on the market.

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[1] Kvalitetsarbejde på erhvervsskoler, EVA 2006

This perception of QA also implicates, which is fully documented by the four interviews, that the schools have the opportunity to establish a QA system which takes it point of departure from their own their own experiences and demands. This is seen as important because the VET sector holds a various number of schools with different fundaments for QA activities.

The QA activities also reflect the principles in the "goal-and-framework-governance" of Danish VET schools, which is seen as one of the basic fundaments for the system. This governmental steering and control system has the direct implication that the schools have an extended responsibility for the planning and conducting the education courses and hence also the QA, which means that that the schools have big responsibility in securing that "what you deliver is good enough".

First of all you it should be exposed that the school management, teachers and students perceive QAS in different ways and thus also have different opinion on what to label as quality indicators and relevance for school performance.

You often face situations where the teachers and management disagree on the purpose of an evaluation   and   what   will   be   the   implications   of   a   possible   outcome.

The management of the schools that were interviewed was, of obvious reasons, very concerned with how "the customers" of the institution assess the service delivered – customer – supplier situation. This will of course rub off on how they perceive quality in way that the management defines quality as the capacity/ability of the institution to meet the expectations of the customers and as example use satisfaction surveys to assess the fulfilment of these expectations.

The teachers, on the contrary, often have their mind set on other values and often the ones that can be characterised as the close relations between student and teacher. The attention of the teacher   will   thus   most   often   be   on   the   processes   involving   learning.

Student perception of quality: It is for the students important that the teachers are experienced and possess the necessary qualifications within their teaching area. The physical placement and environment of the institution also count when it comes to assessing quality. Additionally it matters that that the instructor is capable and knows how to present and pass on the subjects and stuff.

The schools interviewed also underscored that QA is more than merely securing the quality at the schools. QA is also about change and development. To be conscious about quality and working with the concept is thus synonymous with being capable of evaluating and self development.

Summarising the interviewed schools' general approach to QA the following issues were stressed as ideal and desirable:

1. Should be broadly rooted at the centre

2. Be systematic, as minimum build upon a concept

3. Be able to evaluate outcomes of the school's teaching in relation to values and objectives of the institution

4. Be development oriented, lead to improvements and renewal of activities.

5. Hold self-evaluation

2.3.3 View of Experts

At the level of experts the impression is, that experts accept and support the mainstream tendency in Denmark that quality criteria should bee developed at the local level.

2.4 Requirements with Respect to the Target Group

2.4.1 View of Practitioners

The practitioners need a quality system and an evaluation tool that is not very time-consuming and is in line with the working culture in Denmark. That means a system based on team-work and dialog-based development of teaching and training. There is no need for a very complex and "scientific" system which pretend to measure any detail, but merely a system that can inspire to new ways of thinking and performing.

2.4.2 View of Participants

See above 3.3.2

2.4.3 View of Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

Se below – 2.5.2

2.5   Possibility of Quality Development Through the New Self-Evaluation Tool in Further Education and Training

2.5.1   View of Practitioners

There is no doubt, that a new tool for Self-evaluation and QA is very much needed in Denmark.

A general view in the Danish institutions is that there are some attempts to construct a practice for self-evaluation in schools, but this practice is often considered as a limited one because of a lack of systematic approach. The impression is, that practice is accidental and that the need for inspiration and a broader framework is very strong.

Several schools underline that a common tool could bee the necessary inspiration for the beginning of a new phase of the QA-work.

2.5.2   View of Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

The view presented below comes from the Danish Evaluation Institute.

There is in continuation of the highly decentralised system, approach and tradition no governmental quality/evaluation institute/body in Denmark. The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) could be seen as having a semi-official status in the Danish education system.

EVA is an independent institution formed under the auspices of the Danish Ministry of Education. The institution was established in 1999 by an act of Parliament. EVA's primary task is to initiate and conduct quality assurance of education at all levels – from primary school and youth education to higher education and adult and post-graduate education. EVA's mandate covers public educational establishments and private institutions in receipt of state subsidies. EVA's main objectives are:

- To develop methods for evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning

- To develop and highlight quality of education and teaching through systematic evaluation

- To advise and collaborate with educational institutions and public authorities on quality issues

- To be the national centre of knowledge of quality assurance of education

- To participate actively in international and European cooperation among external quality assurance agencies

- To inform the general public, students and employers on quality of education.

Tasks of EVA

Initiating and conducts evaluations of teaching and learning

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Centre of knowledge for educational evaluation

EVA is the national centre of knowledge for educational evaluation and part of its duty is to compile, produce and communicate national as well as international experiences in the field of educational evaluation. Consequently, staff from EVA participate in Danish and international conferences, networks and projects designed to communicate best practices on evaluation and quality development.

Requested evaluations

EVA may initiate evaluations on request. These evaluations are conducted as revenue-generating activities and may be requested by the government, ministries and advisory boards, local authorities and educational establishments. As revenue-generating activities EVA also offers courses in methods of self-evaluation, gives presentations on quality issues, and acts as sparring partner should the need arise among e.g. educational institutions and local authorities.

Accreditation

EVA conducts accreditation of several courses and institutions amongst these are University Colleges and private courses, determining whether students at private teaching establishments should receive the Danish state grant.

Characteristics of QA in VET

The following is based on the newly published report "QA- activities in VET schools" made by EVA.[2] . The report builds upon different types of documentation and on a general perception of what QA <u>can</u> implicate.

The documentation materials include both qualitative and quantitative sources. The qualitative materials include the outcome from a number of workshop discussions and from a working seminar. The quantitative materials consist of an electronic questionnaire survey which was conducted in May 2006 in 88 VET schools.

What is QA about?

The Danish concept is already highlighted decentralised and based on the principle that the QA of a school has been build upon a systematised approach or a certain concept. It is up to the individual institution to decide if they want to develop their own systematic approach or choose a standard concept, e.g. the Excellence model. The schools can to a certain extent choose and prioritise what focus areas to be included in the QA. The Ministry of Education has although set up the mandatory regulations that the quality system of the schools as a minimum must document the following areas: 1. The provision of education and subjects, 2. The vision/mission/objectives for the provider, 3. Public access to the average of the examination marks of the students, 4. Evaluation of the education delivered by the institution and 5. Environmental surveys.

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[2] Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut: "Kvalitetsarbejde på erhvervsskole – Erfaringer og perspektiver". Juni 2006

3. **Public access to examination marks.**

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4. **Environmental surveys.**

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Different objectives in the QA

The survey documents school assessments on a number of areas which according to EVA are essential for how QA is perceived:

What role should the following objectives play in relation to QA activities				
	Very important	Important	Small	Very small
On an ongoing basis secure that the core services of the school are meeting the standards set up by the institution	73%	25%	2%	0%
Secure a high degree of user satisfaction among the students	69%	28%	2%	0%
Secure that the core services of the school are renewed and developed	63%	36%	1%	0%
Deliver input to the strategy formulation of the institution	46%	43%	11%	0%
Secure a common platform among the staff of the school	46%	48%	6%	0%
Function as a performance indicator in the individual salary contracts of the management	31%	42%	17%	10%

The report contains a number of very interesting findings based on questionnaires. We shall in this context concentrate on what is seen as most relevant and important for this framework and context in this report.

Choice of QA- system

The survey documents that the majority of the schools have decided to develop their own systematic approach. This applies for more than two thirds of the schools (70%). Many schools have decided to blend and combine different approaches. Only 18% of the schools have decided to develop their own system without getting inspiration/inputs from standard systems. 42% of the schools which have decided to take inspiration from standard systems have chosen to make use of EFQM or EFQM related models as a point of departure for their QA activities, while relatively few schools (5%) male use of ISO or other certification models.

The report draws the tentative and cautious conclusion that you can trace a trend towards leaving the ISO and instead applying to the EFQM.

The quality circle

We leave out the description of the quality circle and concentrate on how the different phases of the circle are assessed by the VET institutions.

How easy or difficult is it to carry out the following elements/phases in the quality work?		
	Very easy/easy	**Difficult/very difficult**
To set up clear, operational and prioritised objectives for the quality activities at the school	54%	46%
To collect data	84%	16%
To analyse collated data	72%	27%
Make use of the analysis as a point of departure for reflection	73%	28%
Translate reflection into a follow up plan and adjust the objectives	57%	42%
Carry out the follow up plan	38%	61%

Anchoring of the QA activities

It appears from the qualitative information of the report that he schools see it as a great challenge to link the systematic quality work to the daily education of the teachers. Several institutions underscore that there is a clear tendency that the teachers perceive the extensive amount of questionnaire surveys as activities not directly related to their daily routines.

59% of the schools assess that the teachers to a large extent are aware of the purpose of the

institutions QA- activities. In addition 44% of the respondents indicate that teachers know the different aspects of QA. You can thus conclude that half of the teaching staff knows about QA which at the same time means that half of the schools assess that the teachers don't have an excessive knowledge about QA.

Almost all schools assess that they to a large degree involve the students as respondents in questionnaire surveys. At the same time the schools assess that the students only to a limited extent are aware of the purpose and perspectives in QA. Several schools are also inclined to perceive the students as interested parties – and the target group – for QA rather than stakeholders. It appears that the less than half of schools 41% to a large degree include the students in a common reflection on QA.

Dissemination of QA

The schools are making use of number channels to highlight the QA for the various stakeholders. 99% make use of the school website, 73% conduct meetings, 58% put it on the intranet, 26% produce news letters and 21% produce reports.

Recommendations:

Self-evaluation can be more action oriented if they are based on the vision and mission of the institution. This requires partly that the formulated values and targets indicate a requested direction of development, partly that they are as substantial to form a point of departure for an evaluation. If the analyses and assessments in a self evaluation expose the deliveries of the school and practice in relation to its objectives a self evaluation can contribute with a documented foundation for revising and further developing of these objectives.

If self evaluation takes it point of departure of values and objectives, there will at the same time be a possibility to create coherence between evaluations on the different levels in an institution. This requires that you establish a hierarchy where the general developing objectives are transformed and interpreted to concrete goals, i.e. the education in the individual class.

It is recommended that the individual school develops a self evaluation culture based on dialogue, cooperation and transparency.

An open and cooperation oriented culture increases the possibility to use self evaluation as a remedy for professional development. If the potentials should be developed, the management and the staff have to both mutually and on an individual basis engage in a dialogue on outcomes and experiences from self evaluation. Openness and dialogue in smaller or more extensive form contribute to the commitment of the stakeholders both in relation to take a position to the outcome of the evaluation and to consider new ways to approach the tasks. In this way the management and the teachers can use self evaluation as a proactive tool giving a documented foundation and reflective arguments for selections and decisions.

It is additionally recommended that the individual school communicate the outcome of the self evaluation.

Dissemination of the outcome from a self evaluation is conducive for transference to others than the ones who have conducted the self evaluation. The external communication exposes the schools' practice and establish the background for a more differentiated debate on education and learning. The results should also be disseminated in house in order to make this common property.

It is recommended that the individual school prepare clear procedures for self evaluation. The school will profit more from self evaluation if the activities are put into a system. The schools should formulate general objectives for application of self evaluation and transfer to guidelines for starting up, carrying through and follow up.

It is recommended that the school manager prioritise and acknowledge the responsibility for securing a well functioning self evaluation culture and practice on the individual institution. A consistent and continuous practice of self evaluation assumes that the management constant emphasise the importance of self evaluating. The management has a responsibility to create and maintain attitudes and procedures which promote self evaluation as remedy for development.

Finally it is recommended that that the school applies a mutual common approach in working with self evaluation quality assurance. A common systematised approach can contribute to the creation of a mutual understanding and framework which eases the dialogue about stages in school development.

2.5.3 View of Experts

At the level of experts the impression is, that experts accept and support the mainstream tendency in Denmark that quality criteria should bee developed at the local level.

2.6 Make-up of a Good Self-Evaluation Tool

10 theses concerning an appropriate culture for elf evaluation, based on inputs from Danish VET institutions:

1. Evaluation is not matter about satisfaction and criticism

2. Evaluation has to be meaningful and important.

3. Evaluation takes both attention and co-operation in the organisation

4. Evaluation is about being capable of both evaluate and be evaluated

5. Evaluation is the fundament for securing and developing the quality in the

   deliveries of the school

6. Evaluation takes time and benefits

7. Evaluation is something which has to developed and be learned

8. Evaluation demands attention on focus, objectives and means.

9. Evaluation reflects a set of values and be in compliance with the pedagogical

   fundament and objectives.

10. Evaluation requires a readiness at both the individual and the organisation.

2.6.1 View of Practitioners

The practitioners consider a good self-evaluation tool as a tool that is fairly easy to use and not to much time-consuming on the one hand and on the other hand is consistent and open – that means that you can clearly identify the values and the meaning of the system and you can trust the results coming up using the system.

2.6.2 Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

Se above – 2.5.2

2.6.3 View of Experts

Mostly all experts agree that the 1o theses above represents a fruitful view on this problem.

3   Conclusions

3.1   Requirements on the Planned Tool

All though the ICT-competences generally are high in the Danish system the planned tool should not bee a complicated one, but a tool that is fairly easy to use for the teachers and the management. The ICT-history in Denmark is full of bad examples of tools and facilities never used because a too high level of complexity or a lack of user-friendliness.

3.2   Cultural and System Specific Requirements to be Considered

In the Danish context it is crucial that the planned tool can be used at the local level as a flexible and non-formal instrument for self-evaluation and QA. The tendency in Denmark is a movement towards self-directed planning and teamwork among teachers and the planed tool must be able to meet this situation. Teachers should be able to use it as a easy and not to demanding tool that can deliver some reliable Information about what to do and how to act to improve performance.

3.3   Considerations to Ensure Quality Improvement

Quality improvement can – in the Danish context – best be achieved by developing a tool that respects the Danish tradition for local based discussions of Quality and evaluation. All though it will bee a common European tool it is crucial that the tool will bee constructed with consideration to the – maybe – special Danish tradition for institutional autonomy and focus on teachers teamwork**.**

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