Education and Culture

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

REFLECTIVE EVALUATION

FIRST COUNTRY REPORT

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1 Overview

In a society revolving over itself and redefining its basic axiological references, as Romania in the last 15 years, concepts like quality and empowerment are not new but not clear either. The storm of the transition to a liberal society flooded the Romanian education with numerous changes, sometimes borrowed over night from developed countries, superficially adapted to the Romanian context. In this roller coaster movement, teachers, one of the most conservative guilds, could not integrate all of the changes, especially that reforms followed one after another. Even situating themselves in the system became problematic, as assessing the quality of their work turned more and more complicated, with multiple axes. Especially that a new educational model has been introduced, competence based and student centred, with very different requirements and a completely different perspective on the meaning of the relationships between teacher and student. Evaluation received different bases, new criteria and a new approach, both from the institutional view (with a complete new system of promotion in the system) and from the individual, the new model requiring teachers aware of their own capabilities. Moreover, in the last years, discussions about quality assurance in education grew little by little, became a vector in the overall process of European integration and were finalised in 2005 with the adoption of a law on quality assurance in education. Overall, structural changes that were imposed to teachers that had to cope with them and… adapt. Teachers in VET made no exception.

In parallel, continuing vocational training developed in slow vaults, directed by the fluctuant fluxes of the market. Suffering from the lack of a general financing system, supported mainly by the small consumer and a few big enterprises, CVT had two different evolution trends:

1. continuing the tradition of German influence, tributary to the vocational schools and the diploma rules,

   and

2. responding to the fresh demands of the new dynamic enterprises, coming mostly from a foreign management, introducing a liberal organisational culture.

The two flows generated two different types of trainers, the first under the school's rationale, the second under the sharp requirements of enterprises.

The first flow is embedded in the educational. Concretely, a lot of trainers in CVT institutions are coming from the school system, often continuing to work daily in a vocational school or a university and being only in the evenings or occasionally trainers in the CVT system, so their activity is deeply rooted within the school system, with all the good and the bad deriving from that.

The second flow is client oriented and market based, sometimes too narrowly directed to short term objectives, ordered by the beneficiary company and forgetting the general educational scope of their work.

Both flows need support in order to relate correctly to their day-to-day work.

1.1   Role of Quality Management

The role of this concept is in dynamic development. The basic ideas are there, with different consequences in different environments. Industrial sectors evolved quicker to the need of quality management, living under the market pressure and affected by the entrance of multinational companies, with foreign management, introducing an up-to-date organisational culture, oriented on quality management.

In specific areas, specific quality management rules became compulsory – like food safety rules in food industry – first for exportation, acceptance in other countries (namely in EU countries) being conditioned by the respect of such rules, then they were integrated into the national legislation, updated to international trends or simply affected by the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* in the EU integration process.

In academic environment, Quality Management became a subject in the curriculum, first in economics and engineering then it entered educational sciences department and in initial and continuous training of teachers. The ideas are spreading, but the pace and effects are not homogenous at the tops and at the bottoms of the organisational hierarchies, neither in different sectors, one of the slowest being the education and training sector.

1.2   Role of Quality Management in the Educational Sector

The role is different in different parts and at different levels of the educational sector.

There is a clear area of application of quality management: administration of education. Elements of quality management were introduced quite soon in the continuing training of directors and inspectors belonging to the school system, in different measures associated to different waves of educational reforms, from early '90s. Such elements grew up to a coherent and systematic approach, in the strategy of professionalising educational managers. Even if the effects are not homogenous at the scale of the whole system, the latency of response being uneven in rural areas, for instance, we can talk about a wide spread of the approach at this level.

Teachers are less affected by quality management in their day-to-day work, the impact on the educational product (students' learning results) being less clear. Yet, the idea that educational act is an act of management is spreading, enhanced by different continuing training measures. Especially in vocational education, where the relation between the quality of the training and the actual acquiring of the competences is more directly and better perceived, so influence of quality management ideas is increasing, even if not always on explicit bases, but in a continuous progressive way. We have to remember that vocational education in Romania was subject to several reforms with Phare support, so these ideas came in a coherent package (especially with curriculum development) and enhanced by the numerous and wide measures of teacher and trainer training. Among others, quality management was defined as a transversal competence in the training standards, being translated in specific themes in the curriculum and in related assessment items.

CVT providers, closer to the market requirements are more concerned about quality management, especially the segment working for the big enterprises, specialised in training for marketing competences or soft skills, where competition is quite hard, as the demand is not very extensive. Satisfaction of the client is vital, and all the parts of the system is feeling it, including trainers. When the client is less concrete and the links to the beneficiary more superficial, quality management is less a vector, especially for the level of the trainer.

1.3   Cultural and System-Related Perception of Quality Management

1.3.1   Cultural and System-Related Perception of Quality Assurance

A system of accreditation of quality assurance measures was established in Romania since the mid '90s, with a Romanian authority for quality assurance (RENAR), certified in 2002 under international credits. Companies became interested to be certified in the ISO system, at the beginning because of the foreign influence and of the need to be competitive on international markets, later mimetically but also because of the growing prestige at national scale, become more competitive itself.

Sometimes, the rhythm being too fast, the concept is overestimated, like a universal panacea. The accreditation under ISO 2000 rules is seen as a supreme mark of the quality management and becomes a mirage that has nothing to do with the spirit of the ISO system. Applied mechanically, quality assurance can be perceived as rigid and limited, on long term the quality decreasing. When it is not applied superficially, in a self-sufficiency like "nothing is new, why so much ado about it?" Then quality is not really assured, the risk of loss being greater then in the first situation.

The very new law on quality assurance in education has only begun to produce influence, as it is not fully operational. The risks are more or less the same as described above, especially that staff has more the tendency to see it as a way to respond to EU integration requirements. The

bureaucracy involved, enough complicated and demanding, is not meant to ease the evolution of the mentalities.

For CVT providers, a specific quality assurance system is, up to a certain level, the accreditation process, introduced in 2004. Structured on the external verification of the fulfilment of accreditation criteria (input based), with an unique insight at the final exam, organized on a specific algorithm by a commission which is 2/3 external, the main weakness, the accreditation has its limits and is perceived more as a barrier to the flexibility of the training than a quality assurance system. Anyhow, the process is outside the daily work of the trainer, which does not feel connected to the accreditation system, unless very weakly, by the final results.

1.3.2   Cultural and System-Related Perception of Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is a problematic concept in the Romanian tradition, almost non-existent at the beginning of transition period. Traditional behaviour is structured around the external control and the respect of the authority. Coming from the rural community of the Middle Ages and the quick development in the 19th century in a paternalist bottom down approach, the communist dictatorship could not but enhance the external oriented mentality.

The traditional educational model translated this mentality in the diploma culture. The arrangements of the teachers training followed the same traditional model, self-evaluation being not encouraged.

In the industrial world, self-evaluation is closely related to individual responsibility, overcoming value in the new enterprise culture. Intervening at all levels, self-evaluation is connected to the professional deontology, the specific of the work of the trainer giving a full rationale towards moving the focus from external oriented evaluation towards self-evaluation.

At the same time, spread of the quality assurance measures, where self-evaluation is a cornerstone of the system, influenced on this trend.

Another helpful element is included in the system of accreditation of prior learning, build around quality assurance principles, self-evaluation having an important role in the procedure. However, the system, defined around mid '90s, did not spread very extensively, due to the lack of incentives and the predominance of the survival strategy among Romanian companies. In the last years, the evolution seem to have an ascending pace, influenced by the spread of the competence based model, included in the accreditation of the CVT providers. From 3 centres in 2003, for evaluation of 3 occupations, in 2005 there were 12 centres, for 23 occupations. Among them, a centre for evaluation of trainers has been accredited, so it is important to consider also the standard for trainers, that is the basis for the tools developed to evaluate candidates that want to obtain a competency certificate.

Competency units in the occupational standard for trainer are:

- - Preparing the training
- - Running the training
- - Assessing participants
- - Revising and promoting the training programme.

The units are detailed in competency elements, followed by a description of a variable set and a guide for evaluation. The system is built on evidence gathering and self-evaluation by the candidate, supervised by the assessor, leading to a certificate officially recognised. However, there are discussions on the reliability of these certificates, the whole approach being too new in Romania and depending too much on the self-responsibility of the assessors, not easy to appreciate in a country where corruption is well spread.

1.3.3   Cultural and System-Related Perception of Self-Empowerment

Self-empowerment is a new concept in the Romanian culture. Vehicled rarely in the public discourse, by some non-governmental organisations of Western influence, dealing with civil rights, child protection and especially with gender issues, sometimes by prude sociologists or political men pretending to have a strong background in civic science, the concept remains exotic.

Yet, the concept is not coming on an empty background in the educational city, being consistent with the general educational scope, defined in 1995 with the adoption of a new law on education: "the free, integral and harmonious development of the human individuality and the training of autonomous and creative personality". It is also embedded in the new educational model, student centred, where the trainer acts more as a facilitator, intending to orient the learner to self-empowerment instead of strictly guiding them towards pre-defined educational results. Moreover, the training standards used in vocational education for a few years, include important elements meant to guide in a very specific way the training process towards acquiring competences like: self-responsibility, capacity for self-development, initiative taking spirit, self-evaluation of own results. Such elements are more explicit under the definitions of the key competences, but they are also present in the description of the technical competences and in the overall approach to training. The use of the training standards is an important element in changing mentalities towards the self-empowerment model, especially that training standards are used also in CVT, occupational standards being not enough numerous to cover the need.

Occupational standards, the general basis for the accredited continuing training in Romania, include also such elements, but in a more implicit way, key competences being less developed, as these standards are developed from the point of view of the labour market. Moreover, occupational standards are also used in the accreditation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, where the whole evaluation system is based on the self-empowerment principle. And if the system is not very developed for the moment, it is growing, so background ideas are there.

2 Survey

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

Even if there is no systematic approach to self-evaluation in Romania in the field of education and training and self-evaluation has not a strong cultural basis, we started from the hypothesis that the degree of professional self-esteem of the average trainer in Romania is rather high, so there is a need for the instrument planned within the project. Thus, it was important to find out how the requirements for self-evaluation look like for different actors involved.

To that purpose, a small survey based on half-structured interviews was conducted among:

- practitioners: 5 interviews with trainers from different CVT organisations, with different profiles (2 of them working with training providers in the private CVT area, authorised centres awarding recognised certificates, with an extended experience, one of them being certified under the ISO 2000 system, the other having built a whole network covering most of the national territory; 1 from a CVT centre in the National Agency for Employment (NAE) system, dealing also with guidance issues; 1 from an NGO doing numerous training programmes for teachers; 1 from a market oriented centre, specialised in marketing and soft skills training programmes)

- institutions concerned with quality assurance: 5 interviews with representatives of different institutions dealing with certain aspects of quality assurance: 1 from the very new Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Preuniversity Education (Agenția Română de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Preuniversitar – ARACIP), 1 from the National Centre for VET Development, 1 from the National Centre for Teachers Training, 1 from the national team responsible for CVT network in the National Agency for Employment, 1 from the National Adult Training Board (central institution coordinating the system of accreditation of CVT providers).

- experts – 3 interviews with experts involved in research in educational sciences, initial training for teachers, and national reform programmes including important trainers training programmes.

- participants – 3 group interviews were conducted, among participants at CVT programmes, one group being trainees in a course finalised with a 1st level certificate[1], the background of the participants being very different, most of them having already a full level II qualification certificate, in domains that do not offer jobs on the labour market (especially machinery building); in the other two groups, the majority of the participants were unemployed and women returning on the labour market, with different backgrounds, part of them having high qualification, with little chance to find a job.

The interview guides were based on the commonly defined items, pragmatically oriented to elements meant to fundament the work on the self-evaluation instrument (see annexes). Interviewees were advised not to elaborate too much on their answers, being let to follow freely the course of their ideas.

Two of the interviews with practitioners were taken by telephone, as the interviewees were located far away from Bucharest (300 km and 600 km). The rest were all taken in Bucharest.

The main results of the survey are presented in the following.

2.2   Perception of Quality Concept

2.2.1   View of Practitioners

A common element with all the interviewees was that all declared quality very important for them, even if the rationale was different, a part a unique element: all used motivational items related to professional self-esteem, as "I like to do well what I am supposed to do". For training providers working on specialised areas, the main reasons were linked to more general elements – "we have a responsibility to the public that needs a job/good competences", "we have a national/ local (sectoral) prestige to keep up". For the more market-oriented trainers, quality was defined as crucial to survival on the market.

What they understood by "quality" was also very diverse.

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[1] It is important to know that in Romania 5 qualification levels are recognised: <u>level 1</u>: supervised worker, acting independently in routine situation (minimum educational background: compulsory education and vocational training or workbased learning); <u>level 2</u>: fully qualified worker (background: generally – vocational education or compulsory education and CVT qualification programmes); level 3: technician (background: bacalaureat + technical non-university education/training or short term university education); level 4: specialist (background: long term university education); level 5: highly qualified specialist (background: post-university education).

Practitioners in most of the CVT organisations have not a very elaborated quality concept, relating quality to the final results of their work, especially on the consistence of the competences trained, either demonstrated to the final assessment or in the insertion of the graduates on the labour market. The attitude is more focused in centres acting mainly in a specialised field, having strong relationships with the enterprises in the area, the connection with the beneficiaries being tight. In the NAE centre, the concept is influenced by the official definition of the insertion on the labour market of graduates (see below), the connection to the companies being more superficial.

For more liberal training providers, the quality concept is stronger. In the market oriented centre, quality is defined by the client's satisfaction, including both process and results, appreciated from the trainees' point of view but also from the point of view of the company that is usually asking (and paying!) for the training. Feed back on the results is taken systematically, eased by the numerous follow ups, the connectivity to the companies being very high and with multiple aspects. However, the quality remains measured strictly against the standards of the companies, long-term effects being less considered. For NGO's the situation is similar, but the reference for the evaluation is wider, against the general scope of the organisation, being less attached to a specific beneficiary and more to a certain impact on targeted issues.

2.2.2   View of Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

The view of the institutions concerned with quality assurance are very closely linked to the official mission and interpretation of the respective stakeholders.

The approach of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (ARACIP) is thorough and complex, considering different aspects and different levels in the educational work. The basic definition used, borrowed from ISO ("quality is the ensemble of features and characteristics of a product or a service that determines its capacity to satisfy implicit or explicit needs") is reported to cultural embeddedness, capacity of evaluation and degree of awareness of the educational results.

The VET Centre, participant in the European group of development of the European quality assurance framework, the view is derived from this activity, the quality concept being defined as depending of:

- *Conformity to standards;*
- *validation;*
- *performance;*
- *(understood as transparence of evaluation and self-evaluation).*

Yet, the concept is system/institution related and less focused on the actual work of the teacher/trainer.

Other stakeholders have less extended concepts, reporting quality to narrower aspects of the process or the results of the training, determined by the inner systems of their institutions: methodological aspects ("mastering the training methodology", quantitative features ("percentage of the graduates employed"), qualitative elements ("capacity to train the competences foreseen in the training plan").

2.2.3   View of Experts

Experts have a more synthetical/technical view, relating educational quality mainly to process and procedures involved ("regulatory concept against predefined objectives and standards of the activity"), associating it with measurement mechanisms and instruments.

At the same time, the impact at the level of the trainer of quality concept is considered low, since the general attitude on the professionalisation of the educational work is far from being widespread, the idea that any specialist, once they master the specific of their field, they can be also good trainers is still dominant with most of the training providers in CVT area.

2.3   Criteria for Quality Assurance

2.3.1   View of Practitioners

For practitioners, criteria for quality assurance are not always clear, a part from the small segment of market oriented training providers, where there is an operational system based on defined criteria: benchmarking related to results measured with specific instruments – client's satisfaction measured by evaluation questionnaires, impact evaluation with the beneficiary after a specific period, quantitative and qualitative indicators on training needs analysis responding to a training demand, continuity of business relationships, rate of follow up programmes. More specifically, the work of the trainer is evaluated against very clearly defined criteria:

- being well perceived by participants
- speaking in an adequate pace and volume
- organising logically the training sequences
- using adequately the technical equipment
- maintaining the interest of trainees during the training
- involving actively and naturally trainees in activities
- being well understood by participants (clarity of language)
- mediating efficiently discussions and debates
- offering constructive feed-back.

Other practitioners have less concrete and diverse quality assurance criteria: quality of interactivity during training, qualitative and quantitative results of participants at the final examination, insertion of graduates on the labour market, sometimes feed back from employers of the graduates or, very rarely, from graduates coming back or recommending the services to other clients.

For all the practitioners quality is referred to actually communicating with trainee and guiding their learning process towards acquiring the targeted skills, those being more concrete in sectoral training (sometimes being referred as "knowledge") and more general for other training providers. For training providers awarding recognised certificates, certification is an important element in their own image on their work ("it is important because people want certificates that may be used anywhere"), introducing an external criterion, that may limit the impact of the training to the acquisition of what is tested in the certification procedure, but also widen the responsibility of the trainer, as the graduates may be judged by any employer at national or European scale.

2.3.2   View of Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

Criteria evoked by institutions concerned with quality assurance diverse according to the concept of quality used.

For ARACIP, the criteria are to be developed in a large debate on the value of the educational work; a proposal for indicators is offered, for the moment, conceived in a systematic approach, covering thoroughly the whole activity of the teachers:

- performing careful training needs analysis;
- planning the activity;
- running the activity in an attractive and interactive way;
- considering feed back;
- using a transdisciplinary and cooperative approach;
- integrating formative elements of current life at local, national and international level;
- promoting lifelong learning mentality, democratic citizenship and multicultural values;
- improving the activity;
- cooperating with other teachers to diversification of school activity,
- integrating community needs and long term interests;
- having continuing training and self-development attitude;
- contributing to research and development projects;
- sharing/disseminating CVT and research results.

A similar view, but less thorough, derives from the discourse of the representative of the VET Centre, reference to the labour market requirements being a current element when speaking about relating to outside world of the school. No structured approach is promoted for teachers' work, since VET subsystem is subject to rules applied at the whole educational system level.

The centre for continuing training of teachers has a more focused view, concentrated on a few dimensions of the professional profile of the teachers, around three main aspects of the day-to-day educational work:

- planning the activity,
- improving the contents,
- flexibilisation of pupils' assessment.

A set of 18 qualitative and quantitative performance criteria are developed, with their related descriptors for pre-university and university staff levels:

- performing job tasks
- respect towards law/loyalty to the institution
- behaviour during work time
- capacity to solve problems aroused
- implementation capacity
- self-development capacity
- analysis and synthesis capacity
- creativity and initiative spirit
- planning capacity, strategic attitude
- communication skills
- writing/editing abilities
- autonomy of work
- teamwork
- mentoring capacity
- counselling capacity
- TIC using capacity
- adaptability
- taking responsibility

As a comment, for the time being there is not very much cooperation between this institution and the new established ARACIP, even if both recognise that it is compulsory for a good development of the quality approach in schools.

The approach with NAE is less defined, relating it to quality assurance criteria in the CVT accreditation system or to specific certification systems, like ISO. One indicator related to the results of the trainer's work, even if very superficially, is employment rate among graduates. This comes form the attitude at the top level of the institution that the main task of NAE being employment, employment rate is crucial for the evaluation of the training. From this rationale a rule was applied, that territorial agencies could organise (= finance) only 20% of their courses expecting an employment rate over 60% within 6 months from graduation, the rest of 80% being courses where 100% employment at graduation was compulsory. Such a criterion led to side effects, training providers being obliged to find (or pretend to find) employment for their graduates even before the training was actually run. NAE changed the system in the mean time, the role of training being considered now more as a factor of economic development and prevention of unemployment, specific quotas dedicated to training within enterprises being allocated yearly. Yet, part of the old attitude is still alive among the staff in charge with training at different levels of the institution.

The CVT accreditation system, coordinated by NATB, is less centred on trainers' work, since the criteria are input based. Trainers are judged in this system from the point of view of their qualification, both qualification in the field and trainers training being considered. The actual work of trainers is taken into consideration forewords, in the definition of the curricular aspects related to the methodology to be applied during the training programme, and afterwards, by monitoring the results of the graduate to the final examination. To comply with minimum quality assurance rules, the examination is conducted according to a pre-defined procedure, respecting certain rules and transparency principles, by a commission with 2 persons from outside the training provider, the third one belonging to the training provider.

2.3.3   View of Experts

Experts derive criteria from reference to the objectives of the activity, the definition and continuing improvement of the objectives itself being considered as well. Main aspects included:

- background elements of planning
- consistence of contents – quality of standards used, with reference to labour market (or a certain company) requirements
- long term perspective
- flexibility in methodology
- adaptability to context and to group/beneficiary features
- transdisciplinary approach
- civic/multicultural aspects included
- team work
- continuing professional development.

2.4   Requirements with Respect to the Target Group

Requirements with respect to the target group were not a special item in the interviews with professionals of the field. Some elements were brought naturally in discussion, stressing the importance of long-term and trans-disciplinary objectives, orientation towards professional attitude, enhancement of self-esteem, but we consider more interesting the results from the group interviews, where this was the main aspect focused on. A profile of the *good trainer* could be designed from the point of view of "the clients", that should be:

- self-assured, relaxed, flexible
- mastering the contents of the domain
- preoccupied to keep contact with requirements on the labour market
- having a wide professional/cultural horizon
- giving practical examples/insights on "the tiny secrets of the vocation"
- considering individual training needs
- respectful/thoughtful with trainees
- using an accessible language
- centred on workplace but equally on certification requirements
- orienting towards adaptation to work environment
- transparent in evaluation.

This image was not always very clear and coherent, participants did not agree easily on certain elements and on the relative importance of one or another feature in the overall picture.

The answers were less diverse when asked about what should trainers consider in order to improve their professional competences. The main aspects underlined were linked to:

- updating their specific knowledge in the field / learning about latest methodologies;
- improving/diversifying their training/assessment methods;
- cooperating with other trainers for a coherent training strategy.

The image about the best method to use to that respect was less focused. Ways recommended were:

- reading professional literature/journals
- using Internet to keep up-to-date
- going to university postgraduate courses
- participating in trainers training programmes
- cooperating with other trainers within the institution
- cooperating with enterprises for improving the contents
- having practice periods in relevant enterprises
- inviting specialists to give insights on how are things running at the workplace.

However, we have to stress that participants were less open to discuss issues from this angle, interpreted as an implicit criticism towards their trainers. It was easier to talk with them about the image of the ideal trainer, even if examples were given about "good" behaviour of that or that trainer. The idea that "it is not me who should judge this" or "how could we know, we are just beginners in the field" was often evoked. Actually, the overall responsiveness degree in the group interviews was not high, most of the participants seemed not very eager to analyse training aspects. As the time available for the group interviews was strictly limited, we could not investigate further the reasons behind this behaviour.

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

2.5.1   View of Practitioners

Practitioners in continuing training are confident in the possibility of raising the quality of their work by mean of reflection with support of a self-evaluation tool. The contents are more or less clearly seen, and the approach is differently estimated, in relation to the quality assurance criteria used by their organisation. For trainers integrated in organisations with less strict criteria, the tool should help them to:

- better identify groups characteristics
- improve the capacity to facilitate discussions
- find the right elements to stimulate the interest of the participants
- raise the utility of the contents
- inspire enthusiasm.

For trainers belonging to institutions with a more formal quality assurance system, the self-evaluation tool should make them reflect on:

- how adequate are the objectives to the specific group of trainees ?
- how up-to-date are the contents?
- how to improve the training methods in order to raise and speed the learning results?
- how to avoid dropping out/failure in graduation?
- are the expectancies of trainees fulfilled?

Part of the interviewees mentioned also the need to have proper conditions to use this tool, attitude of the management or integration in the overall evaluation system of the organisation being very important to the actual use of the tool and the multiplication of the effect. Especially that group reflection was considered by some of them more effective and for this a minimum involvement of the organisation is needed – time allocated, proper space, other conditions.

2.5.2   View of Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

Most of the institutions concerned with quality assurance have a positive view on the quality development trend, but only when closely related to their general approach on quality assurance. An informatic tool is seen as very useful, sometimes even without a clear rationale, informatics' power being, most probably, widely overestimated, once it is coherent with the criteria defined by their institutions, or about to be defined (as previously described).

2.5.3   View of Experts

The view of experts on the impact and constraints of this a self-evaluation tool is more pessimistic, describing easier and more concretely the empty part of the glass. Criticising the existent frameworks for quality assurance or the low degree of awareness among the teachers and trainers on the requirements of these frameworks, experts are concerned with the poor availability of most of the trainers for the self-evaluation and personal development approach proposed in the project. The trainer is seen as caught between a fluctuant market, waving with the short-term view of the small client, and the overall dictatorship of the diploma culture. Between the versatility of a survival strategy and the rigidity of the certification system, enhanced by the suspicious attitude of employers that see training mostly as a cost, only a small part of the trainers could be interested by a self-evaluation tool that leads to personal professional development (and satisfaction) and not to institutional promotion and/or income benefits.

Moreover, most of CVT providers are very small entities, the available time for self-development activities being very limited. At the same time, as most of them are not interconnected, the possibility of a bigger scale effect is not so encouraging and even the information related to the planned tool is not going to be easy to disseminate.

A larger effect could be obtain if the target could be extended to teachers in VET. But the great risk is to fall under the rigid criteria of the educational system for teacher training and in the confusion induced by the repeated changes in the last years). This could affect the elaboration process and the actual quality of the tool, so it is not recommended.

However, an interest is estimated to exist, among a small number of trainers, working in niches that are more secured on the training market and have already a professional and/or a "trademark" image to maintain. There are also professional associations that could be involved and could react positively to this offer (National Association of Trainers for Teachers CVT, National Association of Trainers in Private Training Companies).

At the same time, a few training providers have extended networks at national level – one of the most important being NAE's one – and if they could be interested in applying this instrument, the utility of such an instrument would be assured.

A last positive element in this evaluation: the trend if appreciated as ascending, which gives good signs for the future, especially if such an instrument is designed in a way that allows further developments and adaptations. The interest could grow with the time, the impact being

2.6   Make-up of a Good Self-Evaluation Tool

2.6.1   View of Practitioners

Practitioners were very concrete in specifications needed for a good self-evaluation tool. A part the content, that should comply with their organisation's more or less clear systems for evaluation, that should also be adapted to cultural/sectoral features, the tool should be:
- simple to use
- easy to access
- clear in requirements
- logical in structure
- flexible
- not redundant
- fun.

2.6.2   View of Institutions Concerned with Quality Assurance

The requirements for a good self-evaluation tool appeared not very clear from institutions in charge with quality assurance, a part from the need to comply with criteria defined (or about to be defined) by their institution.

Generally, the tool was seen as integrated in their specific system, most of the times more like a support for the overall evaluation of the trainers then as self-evaluation tool, meant to raise awareness and increase quality in an implicit and direct way.

2.6.3   View of Experts

The view of experts was more focused on "what" then on "how" to build the self-evaluation tool. However, some features were described that were not mentioned, generally, by the other groups. In this perspective, a good tool should allow:

- creative answers
- long term perspective, orienting towards personal development
- individual use as well as cooperative use, not necessarily "face-to-face"
- further development of items included
- national as well as transnational/European dimension.

3   Conclusions

3.1   Requirements on the Planned Tool

Main requirements that can be derived from the survey with respect to the design of the tool are:

➢ the tool should be centred on the actual training activity, covering the main aspects of the didactical work – general and operational objectives, organisation and relevance of the contents, methods used, training materials, evaluation and assessment;

➢ it should be neutral to domain specificity, but allow developments to cover these aspects as well;

➢ it should allow creativity and individual approach, orienting towards personal development;

➢ it should include sharing reflection with others and reference to others image (items for common reflection, inter-evaluation, activities structured on the group therapy principles);

➢ it should be simple, easy to use, clear in requirements, logical in structure, flexible, not redundant, fun.

3.2   Cultural and System Specific Requirements to be Considered

One general aspect is that items should be designed in such a way to avoid cultural emebededness or, more feasible, to identify elements that are culturally common in the countries of the partners in the project. For items that cannot be designed in this way, a cultural adaptation should be provided.

Another aspect is that design should allow adaptation to different quality assurance systems, in order to fulfil their requirements, wherever these requirements are coherent with the general elements included. A special attention is to be dawn to the system of accreditation of competences acquired in nonformal and informal ways, as the items should be consistent with the provisions of the occupational standards in the field (especially with the main one - trainer). However, the objective is not to comply with such systems and provide them with evaluation tools, sometimes leading to bureaucratic application and side effects, so limits are to be envisaged to this respect, the main focus remaining the actual improvement of the work of the trainer.

For Romania, difficulties are to be expected in the use of a self-evaluation tool, and a longer duration for concept and methodological aspects to become familiar in the target group. A superficial attitude can also intervene, under two possible faces : one is denial –« we cannot do it », « it is not appropriated to our system », « we have no conditions to use it » ; another one is full identification to existing practices – « we already do it », « it is exactly as we have the evaluation/updating activities », « it puts no problem ». A special attention should be drawn to the tools handbook and, for the beginning, training of mentors and tutors, if not of all users foreseen in the testing phase, should be planned.

3.3   Considerations to Ensure Quality Improvement

The approach in Reflective evaluation project is expected to be welcome by the target group and lead to long lasting effects, especially if the proper framework for testing and dissemination is identified.

In order to ensure actual quality improvement on along term, two aspects should be considered in the design of the toll:

➢ include possibility to receive regular feed back from testing participants, that can be used as dialogue framework for later use; this feature can also be utilised for measuring the impact of the tool.

➢ further development of items should be allowed, so that tools can be adapted to specific needs of the different target groups by the trainers themselves.

Web based means and are very appropriate for such purposes.

4. References

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