

STUDY VISIT REPORT
on
“Peer Review as a tool for quality assurance”
by Mrs Concetta Fonzo

Participants:

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Keith Brumfitt, EQAVET, UK

Leena Koski, Finnish National Agency for Education, Finland

Pietro Tagliatesta, Ministry of Labour, Italy

Angela Grieco, Ministry of Labour, Italy

Maria Antonietta Salvucci, Ministry of Education, Italy

Valentina Curzi, Anpal, Italy

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Francesca Di Paolantonio, Ciofs-Fp, Italy

Sylvia Liuti, FormAzione, Italy

This study visit report was prepared as the result of the study visit on **“Peer Review as a tool for quality assurance”**, organised from 10-11 May 2018, which focused on the peer review methodology adopted by the NRP for Eqavet in Italy. All the participants expressed their gratitude to the representatives of the Italian Eqavet NRP for providing valuable methodological information and for their kind support during the study visit. The main purpose of the study visit was to provide an overview of the way peer review methodology, practices and tools are organised in Italy. It is expected that peer review methodology will play an increasingly important role in the Italian VET system as well as in other educational and training sectors.

Accordingly, more focus will need to be put on the methodology proposed within the Eqavet Network and other procedures will be necessary to adapt peer review in diverse sectors and areas at different levels: national, regional and local. The experience from Italy should serve as an inspiration for this. Other quality assurance issues were also discussed during the study visit in Rome.

On the first day of the study visit, Mrs **Ismene Tramontano** of Inapp, coordinator of the NRP for Eqavet in Italy, welcomed the group and presented Inapp as the host institution of the Italian Eqavet NRP and organiser of the European study visit: “Peer Review as a tool for quality assurance”. She introduced the two day agenda of the study visit and asked all the participants for a “tour de table”.

The first presentation of the study visit was from by Ms **Angela Grieco**, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. She introduced the role of the Ministry of Labour, its general competences and those in the VET field, within the General Directorate of Unemployment and social benefits. Afterwards, she presented the background to the NRP, the role of the Board of the Reference Point, and the National Plan of Quality and its implementation.

Mr **Pietro Tagliatesta**, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, introduced the latest news at the legal and system level regarding the Italian Vocational and Educational System and related issues.

The second presentation was from by Mrs **Maria Antonietta Salvucci**, Ministry of Education, University and Research with a focus on the Italian Education System. She introduced the Italian system starting from pre-primary up to higher education and placed special attention to the second cycle of secondary teaching and higher education. Mrs Salvucci stressed how the Italian situation is characterised,

at national and regional level, by multiple institutional actors who each contribute to the implementation of the Quality Assurance System. The National Plan is an institutional framework which brings together several existing measures for quality assurance, making them coherent as well as guaranteeing consistent choices and tools. The legislative national references of the Plan are both the "Buona Scuola" (Law N. 107/2015) and the Jobs Act. And, starting from mapping the current situation, the National Plan aims at reducing and preventing training failure and early school leaving through the continuous improvement of the training supply as well as the promotion of a quality culture of systems and procedures.

The initiatives endorsed by the Ministry of Education come within the National Evaluation System (Presidential Decree No. 80 of the 28th of March, 2013) which is based mainly on self-assessment, external evaluation and social diffusion of evaluation results. The main actors are INVALSI (National Institute for Evaluation of Education and Training System) as the coordinator, INDIRE (National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research) and a team of inspectors. The adoption of different tools and instruments (based on qualitative and quantitative assessment) is necessary in order to manage the complexity of the system and its different levels.

The third presentation on "The Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) in the national context and in connection with the European scenario" was by Mrs **Valentina Curzi**, Anpal. She presented the Italian labour market reform with the Jobs Act (2014) and its implications for Italy of the creation of the Active Labour Market Policies' (ALMPs) legal framework and the National Network of services for employment policies. She also introduced Anpal, the National Agency for active labour policies, its main functions, services, measures, and its multilevel governance. Mrs Curzi also described the main training policies and EU transparency tools and systems.

Later, Mrs **Marianna Forleo**, Inapp, outlined the EQAVET-NRP-IT-2017 Project co-funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme. She described the Italian Reference Point Activity Plan 01.04.2017 – 31.03.2019 (restricted call for the QANRPs – EACEA 36/2016) co-financed by ANPAL. In particular, she focused on:

- the involvement of the Social Partners;
- the transnational study visits;
- the two transnational Peer Reviews;
- the training trainers' research and other relevant national initiatives.

Mrs Forleo also talked about the activities carried out by the Eqavet working group on "The role of QA in Vet in the EU policy context" in which the Italian NRP was involved. And, finally, she showed the new Eqavet web site and its content, available at the following link: www.inapp.org/eqavet.

The Italian presentations were followed by a short talk by Mr **Keith Brumfitt** from the EQAVET Secretariat. He introduced Eqavet from a European dimension and the European cooperation in VET. He told about the role of quality assurance in VET and provided information about monitoring activities realised on the use of EQAVET at the system and provider level in 2016, in both IVET and CVET. Regarding the past and future activities and events, he listed the following points:

1. The importance of EQAVET+ which complements the EQAVET Recommendation;
2. The development of the EQAVET Resources section of the website;
3. The Annual Network Meeting in Sofia in June 2018;
4. The development of a strategic review of the EQAVET Recommendation;
5. The 2018 PLA in Cyprus on the QA of higher level VET;
6. The Annual Forum in November 2018.

And, finally, he displayed the European Eqavet web site (www.eqavet.eu) and its content.

Representatives from the participating countries: Greece, Romania and Finland made presentations on their national contexts, NRPs and activities.

The Greek rapporteur introduced Eoppep as an authority operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Eoppep certifies the vocational training of graduates of IVET institutions, the teaching competences of trainers of adults and the professional competences of professionals.

The Romanian speaker presented the “Quality assurance in education and training in Romania”. In Romania, GNAC – the national QA coordination structure set up in 2006 includes the Romanian Quality Assurance Reference Point. The National Group for Quality Assurance in Education and Training – GNAC is based on Inter-institutional Agreement between the: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education, National Authority for Qualifications, National Centre for TVET Development and social partners. In the above framework, the integrated activities to ensure for QA in VET include: self-assessment, school monitoring/inspection, external evaluation and partner networks. While the future actions for Romania will include:

- Developing a mechanism to evaluate and monitor the quality assurance of work-based learning (WBL);
- Developing a mechanism for systematic monitoring, evaluation and review of the quality of vocational training at the VET system level;
- Developing a mechanism for recognising excellence in the provision of initial vocational training programs;
- Preparing 200 teachers to apply quality assurance mechanisms in work-based learning (WBL);
- Developing a quality barometer in VET.

The Finnish rapporteur’s presentation focused on “How to ensure the quality of VET, self-assessment and external evaluation in Finland”. From the beginning of 2017, the Finnish National Board of Education and Centre for International Mobility CIMO have merged to form the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). EDUFI is a national development agency working under the Ministry of Education and Culture and its tasks and organisation are set out in legislation. Its core tasks are to develop education and training, early childhood education and lifelong learning and to promote internationalisation in Finland. It hosts the National Reference Point for Quality and employs about 370 people. Currently, VET providers need to have a quality assurance system in place (Law, 1.1.2018) and they are responsible for the further development of the quality assurance system. Providers can choose their own methods of quality management and self-assessment. There are also voluntary mechanisms (Quality Management Recommendation for VET, Quality awards for VET, Peer Reviews, etc.), National QA Network and QA Networks of VET providers; VET providers can use audits/external evaluation on their own initiative, too.

The morning session was closed by Mrs **Concetta Fonzo**, Inapp, with a presentation on: “How to ensure quality through the Peer Review Methodology, the Italian experience”. She explained how the Peer Review methodology is included among the main tools in the National Plan for Quality Assurance of the Education and Training system in Italy. The educational and training providers are supported to introduce self-assessment and/or the Peer Review Methodology among their methods of assessment. After illustrating the two experimentation phases of the Peer Review methodology in Italy, she also listed the future challenges. Mrs Fonzo also explained the use of the Peers Register with the purpose of compiling a short-list of National experts with an interest in quality. The Italian National Peers Register is accessible at the following link: <http://inapp.org/it/eqavet/Registro%20nazionale%20dei%20pari>.

The afternoon session included three presentations: the first one was by Mrs **Francesca Di Paolantonio**, Ciofs-Fp, who presented the activities and initiatives of Ciofs-Fp; the second one was by **Sylvia Liuti**, FORMA.Azione srl, who presented the adaptation of the Peer Review methodology to the Adult Learning sector, particularly the non-formal domain, through the activities developed within the PRALINE project; and the third presentation was by Mr **Claudio Vitali**, National Coordinator for the EU Agenda on Adult Learning, about the experimentation of the Peer Review Methodology in the Adult Education area and the promotion of it in particular within the Provincial Centers for Adult Learning (*Centri Provinciali per l’Istruzione degli Adulti* - CPIA).

The first day’s activities ended with a study visit to the premises of the Italian Ministry of Labour in via Veneto where Mr **Pietro Tagliatesta** and Ms **Angela Grieco** illustrated the framework of quality assurance in education and training in Italy.

On the second day there was a visit to a VET provider – Ciofs-Fp Lazio in Rome. Mrs **Ismene Tramontano** and **Concetta Fonzo** from Inapp introduced the study visit to the VET provider.

Mrs. **Mery Cristina Lorenzoni**, School Principal, welcomed the participants and illustrated the historical background, the mission and vision, process and dissemination procedures, main functions of the school as well as recent developments. Later, Mrs **Francesca Di Paolantonio**, Ciofs-Fp presented the recent Peer Review carried out as part of the Ciofs-Fp main activities and the added value of the implementation at local level of the Peer review methodology.

During the morning, all the participants at the study visit had the opportunity to visit the Institute, to access the training sessions and to interview training staff and students to understand the real impact of Peer Review on the actual quality of their training offer.

In the afternoon, the study visit continued at Inapp with a final session of “questions and answers” where feedback from all the participants was collected. The final conclusions included the proposal for future NRP projects to focus on specific themes in order for each country to strengthen their area of expertise, so for e.g. Italy could support the Peer Review Methodology while other countries focused on work-based learning and so on. The study visit ended with a farewell by Inapp.

Main issues discussed during the study visit

- National VET Systems and QA at regional, national and European level;
- Structure and organisation of NRPs to support the QA of Eqavet;
- NRPs’ activities and initiatives at national level;
- Eqavet tools and their adaptation and implementation at national level;
- Peer Review Methodology, the Italian experience
- Examples and best practices for implementation of Peer Review Methodology.

Results of the study visits

The study visit organised by the Italian NRP of Eqavet in Rome provided a chance to introduce the Italian experience in using and organising methodological work in relation to Peer Review methods. The focus was both on the work already done and future challenges. In addition, there were relevant discussions about the NRPs’ activities and initiatives related to the adaptation and implementation of the Eqavet Recommendation at national level. The need to further invest in the use of the Eqavet indicators in different fields and areas was stressed. Moreover, it was important to share and exchange experiences from different levels in relation to the Peer Review Methodologies. For the future, the following points will be explored:

- 1) the impact of the methodology at different levels: providers and system;
- 2) the financial requirements and needs to support providers and final users in implementing the methodology.