Chapter 9 The factors that matter for Quality Assurance across six countries

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9.1 Introduction

In this chapter the results of the transnational analysis are presented. First, the contexts of Quality Assurance in (I)VET in the six project countries are described. Next, the case study results for all six countries are compared as a basis for drawing conclusions on which factors overall matter for review activities in quality assurance. The final section (10.4) includes some general conclusions.

9.2 The national context of Quality Assurance in (I)VET in six countries

a. Structure and organisation of (I)VET

The structure and organisation of (I)VET varies considerably among the countries participating in the REVIMP project. In Estonia, (I)VET is primarily school based, in Denmark and Germany training-on-the-job is predominant, and in England, the Netherlands and Italy school based education and apprenticeship systems co-exist. In all countries practical training forms an important part of (I)VET, but the balance differs between learning at school and training in the workplace as well as the order in which theory and practical experience are offered.

In Estonia practical training in school workshops and enterprises follows the theoretical knowledge provided in schools. In Denmark and Germany (I)VET is organized according to a dual system. The German dual system could be characterised as an alternating structure where three or four days of on-the-job training is combined with one or two days of theoretical education at school. In Denmark (I)VET starts at school: students first follow a basic course which is school based and broad in scope, and subsequently, in a main course, specialise in a craft, or a trade. The main course starts with a practical training period after which there is an alternating structure of school periods and practical training periods. In Denmark the student concludes a training agreement for the practical training with a

business enterprise, in Germany the training in an enterprise is based on a work contract.

In the Netherlands and England the school based system and the dual system co-exist. Dutch students can opt for either the block or day-release programme (BBL) which is predominantly practical, or for the vocational training programme (BOL) in which practical training and school based education are combined. The BBL programme originates from the apprenticeship system, the BOL programme in vocational schools. Since the implementation of the Act on Vocational and Adult Education in 1996 both programmes are offered in the same Regional Training Centre (ROC). In England (I)VET is organised in different school types. Post-compulsory vocational education is offered in the sixth form of secondary schools, in sixth form colleges, or in a College of Further Education (FE College). For more practical training students can choose for government funded work-based learning, or for employment with or without training. In England, the Colleges of Further Education are the main providers of (I)VET). Government funded, work based learning usually takes place in the form of an apprenticeship.

In Italy school based (I)VET is provided within the educational system under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. (I)VET more closely linked to work based learning and apprenticeship is managed by the Regional and Provincial Authorities. The schools offering vocational education are mainly vocational schools or art institutes. The programmes are organised in a three year study course at the end of which the students obtain a first qualification, and a two year post qualification course to obtain the upper secondary school leaving certificate. Traditionally the provision of (I)VET managed by the Regional and Provincial Authorities mainly included apprenticeship, but gradually the Regional and Provincial Authorities diversified their provision and now also offer first level, three year vocational education and training courses for young people who have completed basic education as well as second and third level courses for upper secondary school leavers and graduates.

In England and Estonia vocational schools (in England: the Colleges for Further Education) also provide courses at higher education level. In Italy post-secondary courses have been created to train higher technical profiles (IFTS). IFTS courses are planned and carried out in partnerships between schools, vocational training centres, universities and enterprises. IFTS courses are financed jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Regional Authorities.

In the six countries the majority of students in (I)VET is between 15 and 20 years of age. The duration of the programs varies. In Denmark VET programmes are 4 years long, in Italy (vocational education as part of the state education system) 3 to 5 years. (I)VET in Italy (vocational training provided by the Regional authorities), England, the Netherlands, and Germany includes a wide range of courses at different training levels for a diversified target audience and with long and short durations.

In Germany and the Netherlands major reforms in (I)VET concern the introduction of learning areas (Lernfelder), and competence based education respectively. The idea behind these reforms is that vocational education and training no longer should be based on school subjects (and an over-detailed qualification structure which was the case in the Netherlands), but on broader fields or competences that are rooted in the professions themselves.

The nature of Vocational Education and Training for nurses in the six countries and its implications for the case studies

In Denmark, England, Estonia and Italy the training of nurses is part of the higher education system. In Estonia the case studies therefore were carried out in medical schools and institutions that offer courses for continuing education for nurses[1], while in Denmark and Italy it was decided to focus on (I)VET for health care assistants[2]. In England, the normal route to a nursery qualification is also via higher education (entry at 17.5 years or over). An alternative route for those aged 16-19 years is via a two-year nursing cadet course. In four of the five English case studies, the course on offer was a nursing cadet or Apprenticeship course. The fifth case study focused on a course to validate health and social care learning in the workplace.

In the Netherlands the case studies were carried out in five Regional Vocational Education and Training Centres (ROCs); each of these offered courses for nurses. In Germany, like in the Netherlands, nursery is also part of VET. However, IVET for nurses does not belong to the state VET system. Nursery students are employees of hospitals and alternately they work in the hospital and attend the hospital's nursery school. For the case studies five nursery schools linked to hospitals were selected.

b. Reasons for quality assurance

In the literature three core functions of educational evaluation and quality assurance can be distinguished:

1) Certification and accreditation, i.e. checking whether object characteristics conform to formally established norms and standards.
2) Accountability: quality is made available for inspection to other units and/or the society at large.
3) Organizational learning, when quality assessment is used as a basis for improvement at the same object level (cf. Scheerens, 2006).

[1] In Estonia there are only two medical schools, therefore it was decided to add three institutions for continuing education.

[2] In Denmark one of the four cases was an institute for higher education.

The objectives of quality assurance in (I)VET (and institutions for higher applied education) differ across the participating countries. While in England and the Netherlands both the improvement and accountability perspective are dominant and benefit from each other, in Denmark and Germany quality assurance is mainly improvement-oriented. In Estonia a transition in the evaluation approach is currently taking place. In the old system the emphasis was on accreditation and accountability merely by means external evaluation. As from 2006 schools are obliged to carry out an internal evaluation, and improvement is the main quality assurance aim. In Italy a mixed approach exists, in the state education system quality assurance is mainly improvement-oriented while accreditation is a requirement for the regional vocational providers and thus also is an important function of evaluation.

As hospitals play an important part in the training of nurses in some of the countries the quality assurance regulations and systems of hospitals are of importance too. This is especially the case in Germany where nursing schools are part of the hospital and thus also have to deal with the quality assurance system of the hospital. To a certain extent the quality assurance systems of the hospitals also affected the case studies in England and Estonia.

In England and the Netherlands accountability and responsiveness to the needs of public service users are important reasons for quality assurance as is quality improvement. In both countries, the primary responsibility for improving the quality of provision lies within the schools (in England these are the Colleges for Further Education, in the Netherlands the ROCs). Providers are required to carry out self-assessments on a regular basis, and inspections have been matched closely to the quality of provision. Internal and external evaluations co-exist and the idea is that they should benefit from each other.

In the Netherlands, since August 2006, with the implementation of risk-based inspection in adult and vocational education the annual and periodical school inspections now have taken a different form.

In Denmark the main purpose of both internal and external evaluations is improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. A central principle of the Danish approach to quality assurance is the demand for systematic self-evaluation and follow-up. (I)VET institutions are required to assess their own functioning and performance. The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) is an external, independent body for quality assurance, and the development of Danish education. The institute conducts evaluations at all educational levels. The Institute primary focuses on ‘improvement’ whereas accountability to the government takes a second place.

In Germany, the quality assurance approach in vocational education is improvement-oriented, and makes use of rather informal methods. Traditionally, the German educational system was especially characterized by input control and relatively little process and output evaluation. However, since the early 1990s, the

rather disappointing German results in international comparative studies stirred up the debate on the quality and the efficiency of the education system including the demand for some form of output control. One manifestation of this paradigm change is the introduction of educational standards which reflect the competences and skills to be acquired in the educational process.

In hospitals on the contrary a quality assurance system is compulsory. Due to changes in funding mechanisms quality assurance nowadays aims especially at cost effectiveness and cost reduction secured by standards and transparency.

In Estonia until recently, accountability and accreditation were the main evaluation aims. In 2006 an important shift in the evaluation approach took place. From then onwards schools for pre-primary and general education as well as schools for vocational education are obliged to carry out an internal evaluation. For VET schools a common quality assurance system is envisaged which should cover both self-evaluation and external evaluation.

For the training centres of hospitals and for private centres offering courses an external quality assurance system is not obliged. These centres implemented a system for internal improvement.

For Italian schools belonging to the state education system there is neither an obligation for external evaluation nor an obligation for institutional self-evaluation. However, as Italian schools have become more autonomous the awareness of the importance of quality assurance at the school level has increased and most schools now carry out self-evaluation activities. Regional VET providers of vocational training on the contrary need to be accredited in order to receive regional funding[3].

c. Internal and external evaluation

In countries with almost no school evaluation tradition and few requirements for external and internal school evaluation like Germany and Italy internal school evaluation is improvement-oriented and directed at the primary process of the school: the quality of teaching and learning (in Germany an important aspect of this concerns the coherence between 'school theory' and workplace training). In German and Italian schools quality assurance is mainly seen as a task for the individual school and usually quite informal and self-developed evaluation systems are used for this purpose. In Germany benchmarking with other schools or with a standard as a rule is not regarded useful. However, as nursing schools are part of the hospitals, and hospitals need to be certified, some nursing schools use the quality assurance system of the hospital. Other schools object to take part in this process and rely on their own systems. The quality assurance systems of the hospi-

[3] The same holds for state schools which apply for regional funds.

tals usually do not aim directly at the nursing schools (e.g. teaching and learning are not evaluated in these systems).

In Italy, benchmarking with other schools or with an external standard is also rare. A small minority of schools organised networks to exchange experiences and methods, and some other schools adopted ISO 9001:2000. The majority of institutes however (also in the health sector) has a strong preference for an informal pedagogical approach of quality assurance.

In Denmark regulations with regard to quality assurance and internal evaluation are also limited. Decentralisation and self-governance are the leading principles within quality assurance. The Ministry of Education set up minimum requirements for self-assessments, and the follow-up plans which should be based on self-evaluations. Areas that should be included in the self-evaluations are: 1) the provision of education and subjects, 2) the vision, mission and objectives of the provider, 3) examination results, 4) the evaluation of the types of education and training provided, and 5) external evaluations. Taking into account these areas, schools are free to develop their own quality assurance system, or to choose a standard model like the model of the European Foundation for Quality management (EFQM). External evaluation and accountability connected with internal evaluation in Denmark primarily concerns the involvement of stakeholders in setting up the follow-up plan and the publication of evaluation results at the website of the school.

In England and the Netherlands external and internal evaluation are interdependent. In these countries schools and colleges (including those for nurse education) respectively Regional Education and Training Centres (ROCs) are required to undertake self-assessments on a regular basis. In both countries the self-evaluations are expected to be used both for improvement, and accountability, both by the inspection and other interested parties. Vice versa schools could take into account the judgements by the inspectorates, and other performance data during their next internal evaluation. Like it is the case in all participating countries schools in England and the Netherlands can also choose or develop their own evaluation methods. In the Netherlands the Education Inspection Act does not list aspects of quality that should be included in the evaluation, because of the autonomy of institutions, and the tasks they are required to fulfil under the Adult and Vocational Education Act. The purpose of inspections therefore is to establish what institutions are doing to fulfil the tasks, what targets they have set themselves, and whether they are achieving them.

In England the Inspectorate provides self-evaluation templates for schools and an information system for 'Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School self-Evaluation'. In England a list of aspects that should be included in the self-evaluations is available.

In Estonia the obligation to carry out an internal evaluation is of a very recent date. In order to help schools support measures are being implemented such as counselling educational institutions with respect to internal evaluation, issuing a handbook for schools with recommendations for internal evaluation, and the initiation of a VET school quality award. Intensive supervision which used to be carried out every 6 years is no longer conducted in schools for pre-primary, general and vocational education. Instead supervision focuses at individual issues, and is primarily based on state supervision. There is no linkage between the internal evaluation of schools and external school evaluation by the inspectorate.

Accreditation is a major functional area of educational evaluation in Estonia (applied higher education) and Italy (VET system managed by the regional authorities). While in Estonia the accreditation should include both self-assessment and peer review, in Italy the VET providers are not obliged to have an internal or external quality assurance system. To be accredited and to maintain the accreditation, Italian VET providers must demonstrate that they accomplish the requirements in five main quality areas: 1) management, 2) finance, 3) staff (both teaching and non-teaching staff), 4) efficiency and effectiveness, and, 5) links and contacts at local level. As the first three requirements could be met by means of an ISO certification, the ISO 9001 certification is strongly encouraged in Italy, and is in some regions even obliged. In fact more than half of the VET providers are ISO 9001 certified institutions. In Estonia the categories assessed include the content of the programme, the quality of teaching, management practices, the state of study facilities, and quality assurance practices.

Besides inspection and accreditation, external quality assurance also takes place in the form of setting curricula guidelines, formulating exit qualifications and competences, the ministerial approval of provision, funding mechanisms, examinations and assessments (both at national and international level), mandatory requirements for teacher qualifications, and the professional development of teachers. Each country uses its own mix of external evaluation policies to guarantee the quality of (I)VET. The details can be found in the country chapters of this book.

9.3 The results of the case studies

a. Selection of case studies

In selecting the schools for the case studies a variation in structures (Germany, England), geographical location (Italy), or owners of provision (Germany) was sought. In addition, in three countries, schools were identified through the national inspectorate, or based on quality assurance reports (England, the Netherlands) respectively information on quality assurance available from the Ministry of Educa-

tion (Italy). In Estonia and Denmark a convenient sample was taken. In Estonia this was due to the fact that there are only two medical schools in the country, in Denmark it turned out to be quite difficult to engage institutions to take part in the case study research, which was also the case in England and the Netherlands.

As described before, not in all countries it was possible to carry out the case studies in (I)VET for nurses. In Denmark and Italy therefore the focus was on (I)VET for health care assistants and in England (four cases) on the nursing cadet courses. In Estonia two case studies were carried out in higher education (medical schools), the other three focussed on courses for continuing education for nurses.

b. Data collection

In all countries, data collection took place between April and June 2006. Interviews were conducted with teachers, managers and students and, if applicable, with quality assurance coordinators. In Germany in some schools other stakeholders like staff from the wards or the hospital's general quality manager were interviewed as well.

In almost all cases the interviews were undertaken face-to-face, using the interview questionnaires developed in the REVIMP project. In England and the Netherlands some interviews were administered by telephone. In Denmark the questionnaires served as the framework and point of departure for the discussion on the nature of QA.

In England and the Netherlands additional context information was drawn from available national Inspectorate reports. Moreover, in four countries (England, Estonia, Italy and the Netherlands) relevant QA documentation and data collection methods were studied as well.

c. Types of QA systems used in the institutions studied

Within and between countries significant differences were found with regard to the thoroughness and development of the QASs used. In England and the Netherlands however, due the external requirements for evaluation and accountability that exist in both countries, similarities in QASs within each country were also found. To a limited extent this was also the case in Denmark where institutions have to comply with the minimum requirements for self-assessment set up by the Ministry of Education.

In all participating countries institutions have the freedom to choose or develop their own QAS. Across the case studies no institutions were found that fully implemented an external QA system. If institutions used an external system (i.e.

EFQM, ISO or KTQ), or implemented a system inspired by other VET schools systems, they adapted this system to their own specific information needs. In England all institutions developed their own QA system under the lead of a course manager, or a departmental manager and with the input of staff at all levels. In England, in all institutions numerical data is collected for quality indicators related to recruitment, completion and achievement (all case studies) as well as attitudinal data for quality indicators related to learner and employee satisfaction (four case studies). In some institutions data for additional indicators are collected too, such as data on the quality of provision, conformity to external requirements, value for money and parental satisfaction.

Both within externally adapted and internally developed QASs procedures and methods are used which can be more forma or informal. Generally, schools in countries with strict external requirements for evaluation and accountability and a longer tradition of QA in education like the Netherlands and England appear to use more formal procedures and methods. This is contrary to the practice in Italy, Estonia and Denmark where only a few schools use formal methods and procedures. In the latter countries the majority of schools follow an ad-hoc approach, or have not developed a comprehensive system yet. Also in Germany (nursing) schools mainly use informal methods and feedback mechanisms which can not be labeled as a QAS. In German schools, just like in the case of three of the Italian case study schools QA turns out to be strongly focused on the improvement of teaching and training processes within the school and between the school and the training provider (ward). Benchmarking with other schools is not regarded as helpful in German schools and indicators are used only cautiously.

d. Factors enabling or constraining review in the (I)VET institutions

Block A: Design process

Across and within countries in almost all cases internal improvement is the main goal of designing a QAS. Across the case studies the factor design goal does not seem to explain much variation between good and poor reviewers. In some cases external accountability or certification is required: the medical schools in Estonia which need their curricula to be accredited, the vocational State schools in Italy which also want to run Regional training courses and therefore needed to be certificated, and the ROCs in the Netherlands which are obliged to account publicly for their quality. Even in those cases the most important design goal is improving the functioning of the organisation. In the Netherlands, the ROCs report external accountability as a secondary design goal. Accountability is a secondary design goal and is especially of importance during the starting phase of QA. In Estonia schools received ample feedback from the Ministry during the accreditation process; therefore the accreditation is not considered very relevant. In Italy in one

school the ISO 9000 model has been fully developed and all three design goals (improvement, accountability and certification) have been reasons for introducing a QAS. In the other Italian school the adaption of the ISO model is strictly linked to extrinsic motivation such as the opportunity to increase the number of courses and the number of adult students, and therefore is seen as a constraining factor.

England is the only country in which the factor *design goal* explained some difference between more active and less active reviewers. In England, just as in the Netherlands, each of the colleges reported the need for the design of the QAS to pursue both accountability and improvement. However, the colleges which emphasized QA for improvement rather than accountability alone were the more active reviewers, and provided a fuller coverage of institutional quality.

All institutions involved in the case studies have an internally designed QAS, or based their QAS on an externally designed system such as ISO, EFQM or KTQ, and adapted this system to the needs of the institution. No substantial variation was found between institutions which either designed a QAS, or adapted an externally designed QAS.

In Italy a decisive factor explaining differences between the more active and the less active reviewers does not seem to be the internal or external model itself. The more active reviewers involve teachers both in the decision-making process of adopting a QAS and in the design of an internal model, or the adaptation of an external model. This factor, *staff involvement in the design process*, is pointed out in the English and Dutch case studies too. In England, where in all cases the QASs were designed internally, staff input at all levels led to many valuable ideas for the design of the QAS. As a consequence QA processes were developed which had the support of staff which in turn and dependent on other factors in some of the cases led to a higher degree of QA data utilisation. In the Netherlands in two of the three ROCs ranked as intensive reviewers, staff was also involved in the design of the QAS. In these two ROCs the design process followed can be characterized as the prototyping model, an iterative design and evaluation process whereby a preliminary model (EFQM) forms the basis for the QAS of the institution. Next, at the overall level of the institution a global outline of the design is constructed and at lower levels specific parts are tried out and evaluated with staff and other stakeholders. On the basis of the evaluation results the QAS is adapted further.

Block B: the Quality Assurance System

In almost all countries, a QAS covering more important aspects of quality (that is a wider range of *quality indicators*) within a school or college seems to go together with a higher degree of QA utilisation. In England, all colleges have quality indicators based on numerical data relating to recruitment, retention and achievement. The more active English reviewers also use quality indicators based on attitudinal data. In particular, data on the views of learners, course staff and employers, whether work-based or classroom-based, give cause to improvement of

courses. These data help staff to understand the underlying reasons for the strength and weaknesses of educational provision.

In Germany, to be an effective reviewer, the indicators must cover the crucial areas of school quality too, notably the teaching and learning processes, the interrelationship between instruction in school and the hospital wards, and the cooperation between teaching staff. Quantitative, comparative data like the quality indicators based on numerical data in the English colleges are only used with reservations. Moreover, German schools usually do not compare their results directly with those of other schools.

In Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands the data from the case studies also indicate that more intensive review activities in schools and colleges go together with a QAS that has a wider focus on institutional quality. In Estonia, the colleges and training centres which have a broader set of quality indicators not necessarily always also are successful reviewers as one of the colleges does not have the necessary resources to process all the data collected.

Another important factor for successful review improvement especially in England, Estonia and Germany concerns the careful choice of *data collection methods*. In schools in the Netherlands, Denmark and Italy the factor *a wide range of data collection methods* is linked to successful review too but schools in these countries do not differ strongly in their data collection methods.

Data collection methods may include:

- learner satisfaction questionnaires;
- questionnaires for work placement employers, and for employers who have recruited newly qualified learners;
- learner portfolios and workplace diaries;
- lesson/training observations;
- learner interviews;
- peer review (whereby institutions review each other);
- alumni questionnaires and interviews;
- teacher and parent satisfaction questionnaires;
- collection of information on learners' destinations after completion of studies, and their position in the labor market;
- collecting and analyzing data on learner completion and achievement rates;
- data collection for the creation of benchmark indicators (making comparisons with similar institutions on the basis of relevant indicators).

In the Netherlands it is not just the wide range of data collection methods that goes together with an active review process, also the spread of QA topics and data collection methods over periods is important. This reduces the QA burden on staff and makes it more feasible to monitor and improve the quality of the Colleges.

In Estonia the medical schools use a wider range of methods than the training centres. The medical schools therefore are able to review the function of their whole institution; this in contrary to the training centres which just collect data on students' satisfaction with courses.

In England, both formal and informal feedback procedures from staff and learners have led to improvements in the colleges. However, in England, the more intensive reviewers also provide formal mechanisms for stakeholders to express their views. What is more, not only end-of-course review appears to be linked to successful QA in the English colleges but also mid-point reviews of provision. The importance of feedback during the process is endorsed by German nursing schools. In all German nursing schools, every class has one or two representatives who meet with teaching staff on a regular basis (mostly bi-monthly). Also to secure continuous feedback on the learning process and in order to be able to identify problems quickly, German teachers visit the students at the ward, or (one school) have the students one day a week at school during the practical phases.

A third factor linked to the degree of success in reviewing QA information is the involvement of *external stakeholders* in data collection. With regard to internal respondent groups (with the exception of Italy) schools do not differ in the targets groups included in the data collection. In Denmark, England, Estonia, Germany and the Netherlands data is collected among staff and learners in almost all schools. In Italian schools, by contrast, the principal and QAS coordinators are the main stakeholders involved in the data collection. Students usually are not involved in QA in Italian schools. In Italy, in almost all schools the view of external stakeholders like employers is not taken into account either. The latter is also the case in the training centres in Estonia. While the medical schools collect data from external stakeholders like placement supervisors, professional unions and project partners, neither the hospital training centres nor the private training centre collect information from workplace managers. In Estonia involving too few stakeholder groups was seen as a constraining factor, as it appeared that the training centres are not aware of whether their training has been successful or not.

In Germany, where QA heavily relies on informal communication and the process is problem-driven, it might be even more important that all stakeholders (notably staff, principals, wards, and students) are regularly involved in the feedback processes both as respondents and recipients of output. Schools need to become aware of the problems and therefore mutual trust among stakeholders and an open communication process are important. Quality 'data processing' in the nursing schools proved to be very important for the main actors (especially core staff and students) to communicate problems and finding solutions. In addition, in all cases of good review core staff is committed to quality and exerted some amount of control on external stakeholders (i.e. staff at the wards and external lectures).

In England, Denmark and the Netherlands there are mandatory requirements to involve external stakeholders in the quality review, and institutions do not differ as to these target groups included.

Regular and timely distribution and discussion of QA data is a fourth factor with regard to the features of the QAS which turned out to be important for the full utilization of the QA data.

Evidence from the case studies in Denmark, England, Estonia and the Netherlands suggest that the discussions on the QA data are most effective when regularly scheduled and timed to coincide with the latest QA data. In these countries a regular distribution of data, in combination with a discussion and interpretation of the data were most present amongst the more active reviewers.

At the same time it was stated that a fully developed QAS requires much time and effort, both for data collection and discussion. Overloading teaching staff and other stakeholders with too much data should be prevented. In distributing QA information institutions therefore should try to find a balance between the QA information available and the information needs of the different stakeholders.

In Italy, in the two schools which are considered to be good reviewers the QA results are fed back and discussed with all teachers. In the other schools the distribution and discussion of the data is restricted to QAS staff and to the teachers involved in QA.

In England, Estonia, Italy and the Netherlands, *sufficient QA staff effort* is also seen as a factor which promotes an active review process. In these countries, regardless of the extent of QA review, staff generally reported that QA requires much time and effort. The only institution within which little staff effort was reported proved to be a fairly inactive reviewer.

In England, Estonia and the Netherlands, the more successful reviewers generally accept the high burden of QA as they underscore the importance of QA (the Netherlands) or see it as closely linked to the success of their course (England). In Italy on the contrary, the QA coordinator and QA staff did not feel sufficiently rewarded for their work. Only in the schools which are seen as the more active reviewers the QAS coordinator is exempted from teaching duties.

In the Netherlands in each College QA coordinators are appointed, usually at the higher (unit and school) levels, and QA is also a task of a central service of an agency within the College. Besides, within each team, usually one or two staff members have a QA responsibility. In some Colleges the team members receive some task hours for QA. Usually this is not enough, but teachers accept it as they attach importance to good quality of their provision. The latter is also endorsed in the English case studies. Moreover, in England the colleges reported that the implementation of QA required relatively more time and effort than its subsequent usage.

A final factor found linked to differences in the degree of review is the clarity regarding the *goal of using the QAS*.

In England, all course staff within all consulted institutions understand the goals of their QAS. However, at the most successful reviewers, students appeared to be aware of the purposes of the QA too. This was also the case in one of the three Dutch Colleges most active in terms of QA and review. In this College as it was the case in the two other Dutch colleges which are seen as active reviewers, staff reported that QA had definitively proved its usefulness for improving the functioning of the organisation.

Schools in Denmark (the two more active reviewers) and Italy (one of the two best reviewers) reported something similar. In these schools the more extensive evaluations and regular QA procedures had led to a comprehensive perception of the performance and functioning of all important aspects of the institution, which in its turn enables a better review.

Block C: The implementation process

The importance of *training users for quality assurance* is stressed in all countries and at the same time the data show that in generally user training is too limited. The limitations concern the target group (often only part of those who will be involved in quality assurance), the content of the training (not all relevant aspects are covered: explaining the relevance of QA, specifying the QA goals, motivating staff for QA, skills training, etc.), and the amount of time spent on training users (often a brief, one shot activity). Too often the full complexity of QA is not understood and it is implicitly assumed that setting up QA activities can be done without the careful preparation, monitoring and optimization of this implementation process.

Another prerequisite for successful QA emerging from the case studies in the various countries is the *involvement of the various stakeholders* (especially management, teachers, and students) in the process of starting QA, and making it work. Similarly to the factor 'user training', stressing the importance of the factor goes together with drawing the conclusion that stakeholder involvement is often too limited. Involvement is important as it promotes innovation ownership, and because it promotes input from various user perspectives and the modification of QA to the needs of the stakeholders.

A third factor that draws the attention is the provision of *resources* for working on QA. QA is not something that just can be done next to all other work obligations. Especially during the implementation of QA extra time and money will be needed for accomplishing QA, but also in a more steady state time, tools and money will be needed for collecting, processing, distributing, interpreting QA data, and for using them for taking and implementing measures for improving in-

stitutional performance. In general, the allocation of extra resources to QA is too limited and as such constrains QA.

Block D: School organisational characteristics

It is striking that actually none of the about 30 cases studied in six European countries has a solid impression of its *performance* in comparison with other similar educational institutions in their country! The same will probably apply for many other educational institutions around the world.

This fact stresses the importance of performance feedback to and quality assurance within educational institutions as along that road staff obtain information on how they are doing in comparison with others, and based on that, how they can improve institutional performance.

In many cases however QA proves to be a matter of collecting data *within* the own institution (e.g. student satisfaction surveys), or of collecting external data which do not allow benchmarking with similar competitors (e.g. data from employers on how satisfied they are about the skills and knowledge of the students they receive from the school). In other words, performance feedback on how much students are learning within a school in comparison with similar schools can be very important for raising performance awareness and performance improvement.

Two other factors included in the theoretical framework prove to matter although at least one of them in a bit different way than assumed in the theoretical framework: *the pressure to improve* and *QA-attitude*. The assumption in the theoretical framework is that schools will be more inclined to work on quality assurance if they experience a strong pressure to improve, for example from the school inspectorate, or due to fierce competition between schools. Actually this pressure to improve overall was not felt that much in the cases studied. Only one Dutch school experienced such a pressure to improve as a consequence of a negative judgement from the inspectorate about the school's performance. In all other cases a high stakes improvement pressure was not observed and did not explain differences between schools in QA and review.

The QA-attitude however proved to be a factor that matters, not so much in terms of the attitude towards the QA-system used within the school but more as *staff's intrinsic motivation to secure and improve the quality of instruction and the knowledge and competences of students*. In those schools where this attitude is available staff are more motivated to work on QA and to work with the QAS the school has.

The German case studies gave reason for formulating the hypothesis that the need for formal QASs is smaller in smaller educational institutions than in larger ones simply because people have a better overview in small institutions of how things are going, and it is also easier to communicate and cooperate with the goal of improvement in smaller schools.

The studied English cases gave reason to assume that QA flourishes more in those institutions where the *principal encourages QA* and the use of a QAS.

The findings pointed here again to the fact that QA and review are more difficult under those circumstances where the *resources* to work on QA are too limited (which makes sense if one thinks of all the work involved in collecting, analysing, distributing, discussing QA data, and in developing and implementing improvement actions).

The UK data pointed to the fact that QA in health education is a matter of multiple organizations which have to work together, e.g. educational and medical institutions like hospitals, which is not always easy as they may not necessarily have the same ideas about quality and how it can be secured.

Block E: The use of QA information

The picture of the use of the QA information is varied within a country which is logical as it was deliberately attempted to involve institutions in the study which differ in terms of the intensity of their review activities. In the Netherlands for example three schools were active regarding data collection, discussion, diagnosis and improvement activities. All five schools seemed to use the quality assurance information also in a conceptual way: the data encouraged their quality awareness and concern and improved their insights in the strengths and weaknesses of their institutions. Similar pictures were observed in other countries. In England and in Italy a relationship was found between the length of QAS use and the intensity of QAS use. Schools gradually grow to higher levels of Quality Assurance: more parts of the institution working on Quality Assurance, more aspects of school functioning for which quality assurance becomes important, and from collecting data and looking at the data, to taking structural measures based on the feedback from the QAS to improve school functioning.

Block F: (Un) intended effects

First of all, it is difficult to attribute specific developments within the cases studied to the introduction of Quality Assurance as in many cases there are often simultaneous other phenomena that may be responsible for these developments. So, only the perceived effects of the introduction of quality assurance (systems) can be reported here.

Staff within the studied educational institutions are often quite positive about the effects of quality assurance. In the Netherlands the most active reviewers report improved instruction, better student performance, lower drop out rates as effects. Other Dutch schools see Quality Assurance as something extra that needs to be done and which takes too much time. In one case a school complains about the number of improvements which have to be accomplished due to Quality Assurance and another about the friction between internal and external (inspectorate) quality indicators.

The German findings show that quality maintenance in the view of some respondents is something which does not ask for formal arrangements as it is part of everyday's work. Larger school especially have to invest into maintaining quality because informal Quality Assurance falls short there. In some cases staff also point to the workload caused by quality assurance.

The Italian institutes report positive (better learning programmes, better teaching and student performance) and negative (higher workload, key players do not always feel rewarded) quality assurance effects.

The findings in England are positive: more awareness of institutional strengths and weaknesses, actions based on that information, and as a result better teaching, assessment, learning, student performance in school, employer satisfaction and student employability in companies.

More quality awareness and problem solving due to Quality Assurance are also reported in Denmark, however, some Danish teachers feel somewhat controlled by means of Quality Assurance.

Finally, only positive Quality Assurance effects were found in Estonia: more teacher self-confidence, more quality concern, better learning programmes, improved information flows, improved school management, and student performance.

e. A summary of the relevant factors

This chapter has shown the strong variation in the structure and organisation of IVET across the six project countries. Despite this variation some factors prove to be of general importance for Quality Assurance and review.

Block A: design of the QAS

Internal institutional improvement is the main goal for developing a QAS and for working on Quality Assurance within the institutions for healthcare in all project countries (as such the factor does not explain variation in review activities). All QASs have been developed within the institution, or were external QASs which had been adapted to the needs of the institution. The factor *staff involvement in the design process* seems important for successful quality assurance: if staff can input their ideas and needs in the design process, this leads to quality assurance processes which are supported by staff, and to more intense review activities.

Block B: the nature of the QAS

Several aspects of the QAS prove to matter for review. One important QAS feature is the *coverage of the quality indicators*: a wider coverage of institutional quality seems to go together with a stronger utilization of quality assurance data.

Coverage is also important in terms of the extent to which the *views of the various relevant internal and external stakeholders* are covered: e.g. the perceptions of learners, employers and teachers on the quality of the teaching-learning process.

A more *wide range of data collection methods* is linked to more active review in a number of countries which raises the question what causes what: does more active review lead to more data collection, or does a variety of data collection methods lead to more active review?

Spreading data collection on various topics over time (instead of collecting most data at one moment in a school year) seems to reduce the burden put on school staff and it enables successful QA and review.

The regular and timely distribution and discussion of QA data is another factor influencing the utilization of QA data. Regularly scheduled discussions of QA findings which are timed to coincide with the latest QA data promote more active review.

Differences in the degree of review activity may also be explained by the clarity of the QA enterprise to all relevant stakeholders; clarity on what QA is for is a prerequisite for starting to work on it and invest in it (assuming that the stakeholders agree with investing in QA).

Two factors which can constrain active review are insufficient rewards for QA staff (feeling appreciated) and the lack of time and other resources for working on QA.

Block C: the implementation process

Our findings show three important implementation factors which can be seen as enabling factors but at the same time in the case studies did not meet the required levels and as such had a constraining influence:

a. *Training users* in all relevant aspects of QA (its relevance, the goals, the required skills). Often too few staff are trained regarding just part of the relevant aspects, and for a short time. The reason is probably that one is not aware of the relevance of careful user training.
b. The *involvement of all relevant stakeholders* in starting the QA activity (see also Block B) and in making it work. Stakeholder involvement is so important because it promotes ownership and a good match of QA activities with the needs of the various actors.

c. The *provision of the resources* required for QA: extra time, staff and other resources are needed; QA is not just something that can be done next to all other obligations.

Block D: the school organisation

The data point to the importance of indicators showing a school's performance in comparison with similar schools. That kind of information is missing and as such does not encourage schools to improve their performance. There is a case of a school *pressured by the inspectorate to improve* which clearly stimulated the school to work on QA and to improve.

Staff's *intrinsic motivation* to secure and improve learners' achievement, logically, proves to be a very influential factor in the context of QA as it goes together with a positive QA attitude and as it promotes the desire to have good information for improving student performance. The *principal can motivate* and encourage staff to work on QA.

The Table below summarizes the enabling and constraining factors in the six countries studied.

	Factors
Enabling	Design process: staff involvement
	QAS that widely covers important aspects of quality and the relevant stakeholder views
	Procedures QA: • Wide range data collection methods • Data distribution: regular and timely • Spreading data collection activities over time
	Enough staff effort in QA
	Clarity QA goal
	Staff motivation for promoting student performance and QA
	Pressure to improve
	Encouragement from principal
	School size
Constraining	Lack of innovation resources
	User training too limited
	Limited staff involvement in QA
	Insufficient intrinsic rewards QA staff

9.4 Conclusions and reflections

The background of the "From Review to Improvement" (Revimp) project is the observation that although many resources are being invested in the early stages of the so-called Quality Assurance cycle (especially in collecting data about the functioning of educational institutions) the data are not utilized enough for reviewing and improving institutional functioning. As a result, considerable resources are spent on Quality Assurance, however, its benefits are limited which may in the long run imply that it is experienced as a useless burden which however cannot be stopped because an external body demands it. That would be a pity as Quality Assurance, if carried out in the right way, may be a valuable approach for improving the functioning of educational institutions.

Because of this problem definition quality assurance and review processes have been studied in 30 cases in six European countries to discover which factors cause that some European institutions for IVET are more successful in reviewing and improving their functioning than others. The goal was to use the insights gained as a basis for developing guidelines for quality assurance in European IVET and as such to contribute to making Quality Assurance in European IVET more productive.

Problem confirmation

Based on the findings from the case studies the conclusion can be drawn that it indeed proves to be difficult for IVET staff to transform collected quality assurance data into improvement-oriented activities.

The framework presented in chapter two of this book reflects the assumption that the utilization of quality assurance data implies that problems in institutional functioning are detected, diagnosed and solved and that this will lead to a higher quality of instructional processes within IVET providers, which in turn will improve student achievement. The whole causal chain from data collection to improved student performance was seldom observed in our case studies. In many IVET institutions collected Quality Assurance data are distributed within the institution to some extent, they are looked at, possibly discussed and in some cases do lead to measures to solve and improve one or more aspects of the IVET institution. The measures are usually of a down to earth nature and often not the result of a profound analysis of what is wrong, which factor(s) cause(s) the problem(s), and what may be the right solution of the problem. Moreover, it was striking to see that the IVET providers in general did not work on quality assurance in the context of improving its 'production' (i.e. how much their students learn in terms of gaining knowledge and acquiring skills). Most IVET providers did not have an idea of their level of performance in these terms and thus also did not focus on improving the performance levels of their students by means of quality assurance.

Instrumental use of Quality Assurance data is limited; respondents report especially higher levels of quality awareness due to Quality Assurance activities (i.e. more conceptual use), however, there are signs of a very gradual growth to higher levels of instrumental use.

Striking is the contrast between the features of the utilization of Quality Assurance data and the *perceived* effects of data use; the latter ones in several countries are very positive, too positive to reflect reality accurately (given the limited use of the AQ data). Next to grown quality awareness levels, improved instruction, and student performance levels are also mentioned as effects of Quality Assurance. In addition to the reported, intended effects quite a few respondents in the various countries complain about the high workload due to Quality Assurance.

Setting and evaluating goals

The Revimp project is a Leonardo project with a European focus which connects with the work of The Technical Working Group "Quality in Vocational Education and Training" of the European Commission. In chapter one of this book reference is made to the Common Quality Assurance Framework developed by the Technical Working Group to support European VET providers in the development, evaluation and improvement of their quality assurance systems.

The Common Quality Assurance Framework proposes a very rational, goal-driven approach to quality assurance; the assumption is that IVET providers set goals they want to accomplish, implement actions to achieve the goals set, after some time evaluate the achieved outcomes, and based on the findings, correct where necessary, to optimize goal accomplishment.

The images obtained of how IVET providers work on quality assurance does not resemble this ideal. The goals of IVET providers are probably too general to give directions for the actions to be implemented in schools, and for evaluating to what extent a school meets the goals set. IVET providers evaluate all kinds of aspects of their functioning like for example data on the satisfaction of learners, teachers, and parents with the courses provided, and employers' opinions of students' competences. These evaluations are definitely important and also may lead to important improvements of processes at classroom and at school level, and, as a result, to more competent students. However, the goal-driven approach only is applicable here in terms of the goals that may be set *in response to quality assurance findings* (e.g. the goal of reducing the percentage of drop outs to a specific percentage if the Quality Assurance data show that this percentage is unacceptably high). In other words, Quality Assurance is not so much a matter of providing feedback on overall institutional performance goals. IVET providers like companies setting specific profit goals could set goals in terms of for example the percentage of students who should pass the examinations with specific scores, and then regularly could benefit from feedback on the degree of goal accomplishment. However, this was not what was observed in practice which is a pity as there is much empirical evidence (Locke and Latham, 1990) that Goal Setting can im-

prove performance dramatically. Setting clear, specific, challenging and attainable goals can focus activities, it can motivate to search for strategies that produce better results, and employees may persist more if they have committed themselves to specific and challenging goals.

Especially the combination of Goal Setting and feedback can be very powerful in improving the performance of individuals and organizations (the feedback can give precise information on how one is progressing towards one or more set goals and as such can help in timely searching for better task strategies if the strategies used do not lead to the intended results).

A revised theoretical framework

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework with the potential critical success factors for the review phase (which had been based on a review of the literature) and their relationships. The framework was tested in the case studies which confirmed a considerable part of the framework in terms of factors that enabled or constrained a successful review stage in quality assurance activities.

Some of the factors in the theoretical framework did not play the expected role in the case studies which may be caused by the selectiveness of our cases (in other words, maybe the factors will be confirmed in a new sample of case studies, for example, because those cases vary more in that sample and as a result explain more variance in review activities), by the validity of the measurements, or by the fact that those factors indeed are not decisive for the review activities.

It should be noted that a same kind of reasoning applies to those factors in the theoretical framework which were confirmed in the case studies, and to those new factors not included in the framework which in the case studies seemed to be influential in the review activity. The case studies are of an explorative nature; more general statements about influencing factors require large scale research and random sampling.

All four blocks of factors included as influencing the utilization of quality assurance data in the theoretical framework in chapter 2 prove to matter in the case studies (Block A: Design process; Block B: Characteristics of the Quality Assurance System; Block C: Nature of the implementation process; Block D: Features of the school organization).

The design process block has the least influence. The only design characteristic that seemed to matter in the case studies is *the degree of involvement of school staff* in the design process, or in the acquisition of an already existing Quality Assurance System.

Characteristics of the Quality Assurance System (Block B) seem to have a stronger relationship with the review process: *the wide coverage of quality aspects, and the wide involvement of relevant stakeholders in the Quality Assurance System* are important. These findings give the impression that in the eyes of school

staff a Quality Assurance System is more credible if all stakeholders can give their views on the quality of the functioning of the IVET provider, and if a variety of quality aspects is included in judging institutional quality.

The fact that these two aspects of the quality assurance system are related to the success of the review stage raises the cause-effect question: is more successful review caused by a more wide inclusion of a variety of quality aspects and relevant stakeholders, or does a stronger focus on quality assurance including the review process lead to a more widely developed range of quality assurance aspects, and to more involved stakeholders? This dilemma applies to all factors having a relationship with the review stage and cannot be solved in this type of research, which asks for caution in drawing conclusions about (the direction of the) relationships.

Some procedural aspects of quality assurance also have a relationship with the intensity of the review stage: *the range of methods used for collecting quality assurance data* (more is also better here), *spreading data collection over time*, *the regular and timely distribution of quality assurance findings*, and the *staff effort invested into quality assurance*. The first procedural factor is similar to the factors discussed already (wide coverage of quality aspects and stakeholders) and each of those three factors maybe explained similarly: a more wide coverage of quality perspectives, stakeholders and data collection methods probably makes quality findings more credible. In terms of the first framework in Chapter 2: it makes the information more valid, reliable (factors B1 and B2), and relevant (factor B4).

The other mentioned procedural factors related to successful review are on the one hand related to the burden quality assurance puts on staff (preventing too much of a burden, by spreading data collection in time), and the staff resources the school invests into quality assurance (enough staff effort, or not), and on the other hand to enabling the utilization of quality assurance findings by distributing these regularly and in time. Quality assurance proves to be a time consuming enterprise and cannot just be done next to all regular activities; it requires in other words that schools and their staff really invest in it and look for ways burdening staff as little as possible.

It may sound strange but although schools collect all kinds of data in order to form a basis for improving performance, this does not necessarily mean that these data once collected and processed are distributed regularly and timely among the target group to promote data use for decision-making. In those IVET providers where the distribution of findings is not a problem the review activity is also more successful.

The last Quality Assurance System aspect enabling review is of a somewhat different nature than the ones discussed so far: *the degree to which the goal of introducing and implementing a Quality Assurance System is clear* to all affected by it. It makes sense that an important prerequisite for the successful introduction of an innovation is that IVET provider staff know why this is done, which effects are

intended, which activities it implies, and what is expected from them. If that is not the case staff will have to contribute to some vague activity of which the relevance is obscure to them, and for which they probably are not very motivated.

That the motivation of school staff plays an important role in quality assurance is also shown by an aspect of the 'School Organization' (Block D), namely *the extent to which school staff is motivated for quality assurance* and for promoting student performance. This probably means that in those cases where teaching staff in general want to do as much as they can to bring students to the highest possible achievement levels they see quality assurance as an instrument which can support them in accomplishing this goal.

Another aspect of the school organization that seems to matter for the review stage is also of a motivational nature, however, whereas the previous factor concerned the intrinsic motivation of staff this factor motivates staff probably more extrinsically: *the pressure to improve*. External powerful bodies like the Ministry, or the Schools Inspectorate can effectively exert pressure on underperforming schools to improve their performance because the schools depend on them in terms of resources. Possibly a similar kind of pressure could come from parents who are not satisfied with the school outcomes and therefore demand better results.

In the literature on educational innovations the combination of two factors is considered to be effective in implementing innovations: some sort of pressure to change and improve, in combination with providing support where necessary in transforming old into new. The relevance of supporting change processes is also confirmed in the REVIMP findings in two ways. If principals encourage their staff to participate in and invest into quality assurance, then review activities are more successful. The other support factor has a constraining impact: training users in the background, and required skills proved to be too limited in the case studies to prepare users well for quality assurance.

Not only has *the lack of training* a constraining effect, *the lack of resources* to work on quality assurance, and the limited involvement of staff in quality assurance also form barriers for successful review. Quality assurance is a complex activity which presupposes the motivation to invest in it, and it requires complex skills to collect, and interpret data just as skills to diagnose problems and to design and implement remedies. Thus, the need for staff training is evident and it is surprising that training receives so little attention. For a training to be successful a short one shot training is probably insufficient; training school staff in utilizing quality assurance data for changing, developing and improving the institution should be a more long term enterprise during which staff may need support and training on a more regular basis.

Non-confirmed factors

As mentioned before not all factors included in the theoretical framework were confirmed in the case studies as having an enabling or a constraining effect which may be due to several causes (e.g., sample, or measurement characteristics, or the factors simply do not matter).

The Quality Assurance System characteristic '*Absolute and/or relative performanc*e' did not explain differences in the review activities probably because benchmarking (information on one's performance relative to the performance of others) was almost non-existent in the case studies. In most cases schools collect information about their own functioning based on the views of their core actors (teachers, students, parents) without having similar comparable information about other schools. As it has been mentioned already in the cases studied staff were not aware of their level of performance in terms of students' achievement levels which may be due to the fact that IVET in many countries does not have the central examinations general secondary education has. Due to this it is difficult for schools to evaluate how they are performing compared to similar schools (similar in terms of the characteristics of their student body composition: e.g. socio-economic status, gender, student entrance levels).

Accessible information is another non-confirmed factor. No problems with accessing the available quality assurance information were observed, and, as a result there was no variation in information accessibility which means that the factor cannot explain review differences. Part of the explanation may also be found in the fact that no school/student performance estimation was available to schools as this kind of information usually is of a statistical nature and therefore may cause interpretation problems for school staff.

Just like the non-existence of benchmarking *Problem solving support from a QAS* in the practice of the Quality Assurance Systems studied was not something that played a role. Quality Assurance Systems providing some sort of support in solving problems with working with the QAS (like computer-assisted information systems can do) simply were not available in the case studies. The relevance of human support in dealing with quality assurance (e.g. in the form of user training) has been stressed already.

The same goes for the implementation process characteristic '*Monitor implementation consistency and effects'*. The reason for inclusion of this factor in the theoretical framework is that educational institutions often are portrayed in the literature as organizations which are not very powerful in making decisions and in implementing these. Other innovation projects in education have shown that the attention for whether the intended innovation really is carried out as intended and consistently throughout the organization (i.e. in as many grades as possible as this will strengthen the impact of the innovation) and which effects the innovation has (important for timely corrections where necessary) contributes to innovation success. In very few of the cases studied this monitoring activity was observed and

thus this factor did not explain review differences between schools. Therefore, the influence of this factor on the effects of implementing a Quality Assurance System remains unsure.

Some school organization characteristics included in the theoretical framework have been addressed already in the previous. *'School performance level'* does not play an important role in quality assurance as the schools in general were not aware of their performance level in terms of how much the school adds to students' school entrance levels in comparison with similar schools.

Two other factors also did not explain review differences: *'learning-enriched, -impoverished schools'* and *'high/low reliability schools'* which may be caused by the fact that most respondents gave vey positive answers, i.e. indicated that their institution possessed most of the characteristics of learning-enriched and high reliability school organizations. It seems quite unlikely that all institutions really functioned according these organizational concepts (socially desirable answers) but the responses make it impossible to draw conclusions about the impact of these factors.

From the case study findings towards guidelines

Based on the results from the case studies in the six project countries draft guidelines for quality assurance were designed and tested in all countries under the same group of IVET providers (about 30 cases) which had been involved in the initial data collection (the test of the theoretical framework).

The test of the draft guidelines focused on their relevance and feasibility for IVET providers. Based on the test results, the final, English version of the guidelines has been developed (see chapter 10 for this version of the guidelines) which thereafter was also translated into guidelines in the languages of all participating countries (see www.revimp.org for the various versions of the guidelines). The guidelines have been disseminated widely among the various target groups.

It is our hope that European providers of IVET for the health care sector will benefit from the guidelines in such a way that the guidelines will support them in strengthening the positive impact of their quality assurance activities on institutional functioning.

The Technical Working Group "Quality in VET" based on our findings, may elaborate its Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF), which so far, is rather abstract with regard to the review stage. Institutes for training VET practitioners with respect to quality assurance may also benefit from the guidelines as training and external support will be vital for assuring its successful implementation.

Very little empirical knowledge is available on the critical success factors for the review stage in Quality Assurance. It is our hope that this EU-funded Leonardo da Vinci project has reduced this gap to some extent.

Reference

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A theory of goal setting and task performance*. Englewood Cliffs: NJ: Prentice Hall.