

**QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED
IN THE HUNGARIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING (VET) SECTOR (2000 – 2011)**

HUNGARY'S QUALITY JOURNEY TO EQAVET



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**Budapest,
March 2011**

INTRODUCTION

In Hungary quality and quality improvement of education and training has been in the focus since long. Especially in the last decade Hungary has made considerable efforts and invested considerable resources to transfer schools into learning organisations continuously pursuing quality management. It is the reason why for some years already a substantial number of the Hungarian vocational schools have been concerned with the management and improvement of the quality of their education and training provision.

The Hungarian approach to quality management in VET has several special features:

1. Hungary is among the few countries in Europe (or even in the world) where quality assurance and quality improvement of education is stipulated by law. Some examples:
 - The 1999 amendment of the Act on Public education aimed at enhancing the quality of education and to guarantee its standards.
 - The Decree No. 3 / 2002 (II. 5.) of the Minister of Education on Public Education Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement requires all public education institutions¹ to have – as part of their pedagogical system – an assessment, control and quality assurance system and calls for continuous self-assessment based quality improvement activity [4.§ (1)]. The [15.§] of the same Decree establishes the Public Education Quality Award (PEQA).
 - The 2003 and 2006 amendments of the Act on Public Education make compulsory for the schools to elaborate their Institutional Quality Management Program containing amongst others the quality policy and quality improvement system of the institution, definition of long-term principles and concepts, definition of processes of the institutional operation: management, planning, control, assessment and evaluation, period and methods of self-assessment, criteria and procedure of the performance assessment system of teachers.
 - The Government Decree 22/2004 (II.16.) (and its 2007 amendment) stipulate the rules of accreditation of adult training providers and adult training programmes.
 - Creating the legislative background to the implementation of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF): in the Government Resolution nr. 1057/2005 promoting the implementation of the VET Development Strategy for 2005 – 2013 (both adopted in May 2005) it is stated that “It should be ensured that by the end of 2008 all institutions - VET providers could implement a quality assurance system designed and developed by considering the European Common Quality Assurance Framework. Furthermore, in the course of implementation of the international programmes the adaptation of the models, methods, approaches proved to be successful in the member states to the Hungarian context should be promoted.”
2. In 1985 the school inspection which used to provide an external evaluation system for public educational institutions was terminated. Priority has been given to institution-level quality management activities.
3. Self-assessment and self-assessment based quality improvement is in the heart of the all institution-level quality management activities. (This applies to all sectors of education in

¹ In Hungary the vocational training schools and the secondary vocational schools are part of the public education system

Hungary including general/public education, VET and HE.) The recently developed Self-assessment Model for Vocational Schools (for IVET) and the Common VET Self-assessment Model (for VET in totality: IVET, CVET, higher level VET) incorporate in full the core quality criteria (key questions), the indicative descriptors and the indicators of CQAF / EQAVET.

4. A lot of central / state support has been provided to schools in the form of technical assistance to implement their quality management system.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES – HUNGARY’S JOURNEY TO EQAVET

“Since 2000 Hungary – on the initiative of the Education / VET Government in power – has introduced a series of pilot projects resulting in a number of innovative tools to support and promote institutional-level quality assurance in VET. The approaches, methods and tools applied were adapted to the specific nature of education and training therefore they contribute(d) to a great extent to the continuous and sustainable improvement of the VET providers. Recently using European and Hungarian funds, VET providers have been introducing quality assurance systems in line with the four stages and the core quality criteria / indicative descriptors of the CQAF / EQAVET cycle”.

The practical initiatives, innovative tools developed and implemented within the Hungarian VET sector to support quality improvement and self-assessment include:

- **2000 – 2004:** The **COMENIUS 2000 Quality Improvement Programme for Public Education** provided a national framework for the school-level quality assurance and quality improvement activities where the gradual and value-increasing improvement of quality, the development of the organisational culture, the evaluation and continuous improvement of the professional work of teachers based on regular self-assessment was emphasised. The COMENIUS 2000 institutional quality improvement models apply a set of requirements and instruments corresponding exclusively to the specific nature and needs of education and teaching. The institutions are free to use a wide range of quality approaches and choose the methods, which best suit their specific features and needs.

The aim of the **Institutional Model I** – which has got the widest application – is to develop an organisational culture that is required for and promotes the development of **partner-focused operation**. The institution should identify its partners and regularly assess their needs and demands. Based on the analysis of these demands, the institution should continuously improve its own operation. In the process of continuous improvement it is the conscious and consistent implementation of the PDCA (Plan – Do – Check – Act) cycle, which offers a real help to the institution (*see Figure 1*).

The aim of **Institutional Model II** is to implement **Total Quality Management (TQM)** comprising every area of the institutional operation. For this purpose the institutions have to make significant progress in the following three areas:

- **Ability to control processes:** The institution should develop and introduce a documented quality management system, which covers all the processes affecting the educational and teaching activities of the institution. The results of process control should be implemented into the daily operation of the institution.

The processes to be controlled cover **8 areas** of the institutional operation as follows:

- the responsibility and commitment of the management of the institution,
- the development of human resources,
- safe institution,

- education, teaching, training,
- measurement, analysis and corrective action,
- management of partnerships,
- provision of other resources,
- operation of the institution.
- **Ability to develop organisational culture:** The management of the institution should consciously develop the organisational culture by involving all staff members.
- **Ability of continuous improvement:** The management and staff of the institution should be able to apply the PDCA cycle continuously in every single area of the institutional operation.

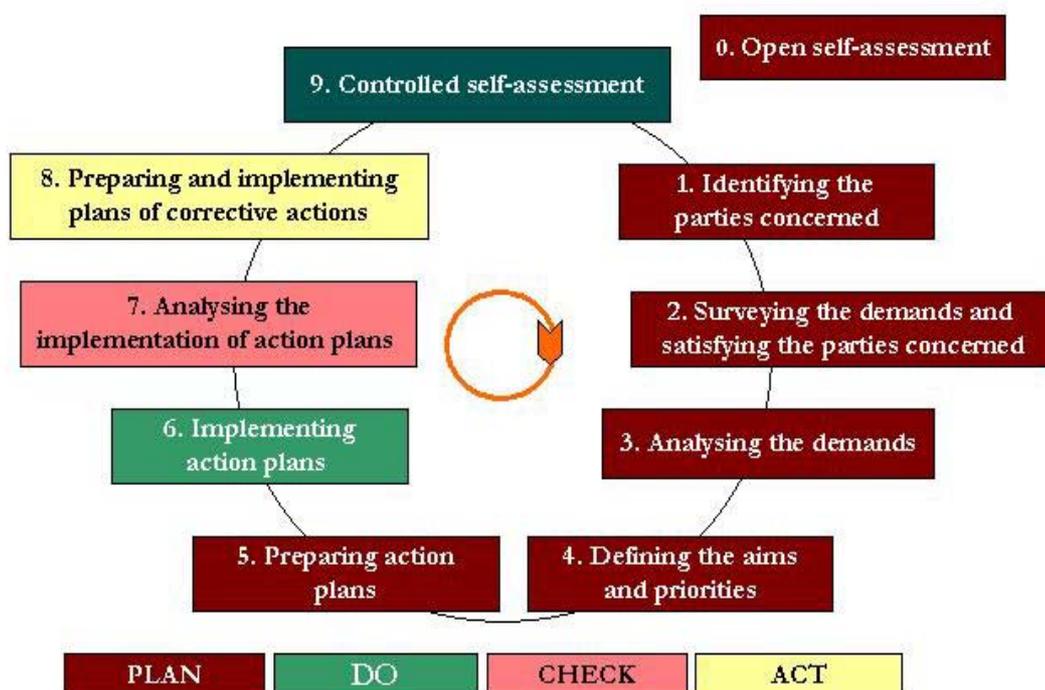


Figure 1: Logical flowchart of the COMENIUS 2000 Institutional Model I

The COMENIUS 2000 Programme was a huge innovation: $\approx 23\%$ of all Hungarian public schools (approx. 2000 from among the 8.400) participated in it; 40% of them were VET providers; their quality improvement work was supported by 500 consultants. A large-scale professional support was provided to schools free of charge in the form of Quality Improvement Manual, methodological guidance materials, consultancy, training, monitoring and feedback, school network for promoting mutual learning, Public Education Quality Award etc.

- **2002:** The **Hungarian Public Education Quality Award (PEQA)** was established by the Minister of Education with the aim of recognising the outstanding performance and spreading best practices of schools in the field of public education Total Quality Management. This award also aims at maintaining or even raising the enthusiasm and commitment of schools to (self-assessment based) quality improvement. The PEQA **Self-assessment Model** is based on the EFQM Excellence Model but the criteria were fully

translated to the tasks and operation of the Hungarian schools. Accordingly, a public education version of the EFQM Excellence Model has been elaborated. Besides, the requirements of the COMENIUS 2000 institutional quality improvement models have also been incorporated. The criteria of the model can be interpreted for all types of public education institutions (kindergarten, primary and grammar schools, vocational and secondary vocational schools etc.), and their interpretation helps reviewing and evaluating the institution's operation and results. *Figure 2* below shows the structure of the PEQA Self-assessment Model.

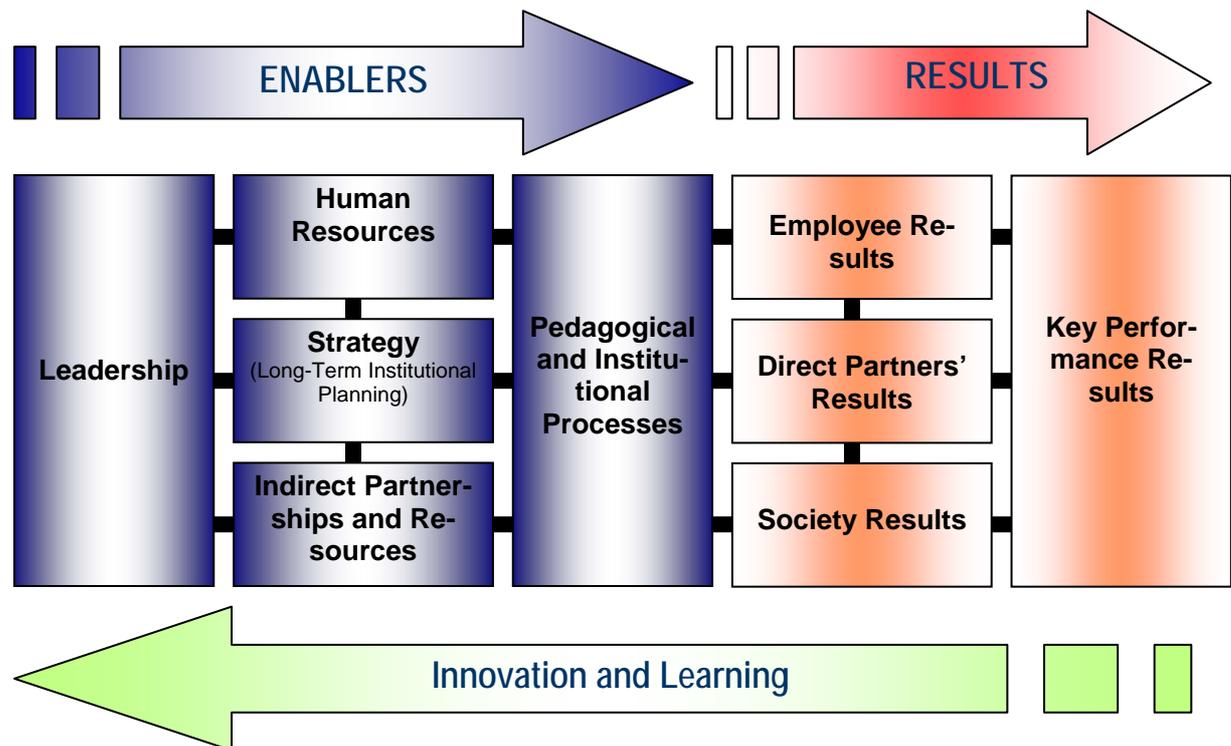


Figure 2: The Model of the Hungarian Quality Award for Public Education

The Hungarian Public Education Quality Award is the first award of its kind, a **unique** professional development, as until 2002, with the exception of the Malcolm Baldrige Award (USA), the set of criteria of all other national education quality awards was fully identical with the model used by industry. By the development of the Public Education Quality Award, Hungary has been fulfilling again a pioneer role in the field of school improvement. So far, more than 150 schools submitted their application for the PEQA, one third of them were awarded recognition (gold-, silver- or bronze level Award or Certificate of merit), 50% of the prize-winners are VET schools. 2 institutions-PEQA winners participated in the European Excellence Award completion with success (one became Finalist, and the other was awarded the recognition "5* Recognised for Excellence" in the Public Sector category).

- **2002: The Adult Training Accreditation System**

The intention with introducing the adult training accreditation system was to provide guarantees for those participating in training that the institutions - adult training providers chosen by them and using public funds (from state budget or EU funds) are operating in a

transparent, reliable, regulated and controlled way. On behalf of the labour market there is a clear expectation towards the institutions - adult training providers, namely: to provide adult training and services related to adult training based on quality principles. The levels of quality assurance / accreditation are:

1. **Registration of institutions: precondition of adult training provision.** (5000 institutions)

Adult training institutions may provide adult training only if they are registered at the designated state agency in charge of employment (i.e. labour centre). In case of complying with the conditions defined in a separate provision of law, a certificate of entry in the registration shall be issued with effectiveness for a period of 4 years. The registry of institutions - adult training providers contains data that provide information in sufficient details for the transparency of the specialised activity of the institutions.

2. **Institutional accreditation: precondition for applying public funds.** (1300 institutions)

The institutions of adult training included in the registry may request their accreditation. The purpose of institutional accreditation – in the interest of adults participating in the training and other stakeholders – is to ensure that the institution conducts its adult training activities in accordance with the higher quality requirements.

The basic condition of the accreditation is that the institution of adult training should have at least one already implemented, accredited training programme, a human resource development plan, descriptions of training processes as well as a quality policy, quality objectives, a quality management system and a self-assessment system in place.

3. **Program accreditation** (1200 accredited programs)

While the **registration of adult training providers** is obligatory and serves mainly statistical purposes, accreditation of training institutions and/or training programmes is optional. **Accreditation** serves as a mechanism for assuring quality and is a prerequisite of receiving public subsidy, too.

- **2003-2009: Quality Improvement in the Development Program for Vocational Training Schools (Phase I: 2003-2006, Phase II: 2006-2009)**

The Development Program for Vocational Training Schools was launched in 2003 by the Hungarian Education Government with the aim to reform the vocational school system and to improve the quality of education and training in these educational establishments as well as to improve the job opportunities and career prospects of young people on the labour market. The Program primarily focused on the **key areas** of the vocational training activity such as development of methodology in vocational grades, reintegration of disadvantaged students, renewal of prevocational training”, assessment and evaluation, school management and self-development. **Quality management and quality improvement were also among the key areas and top priorities of the Program** in the frame of which – one of the first countries in the European Union to adopt it – a quality management system based on the *Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF)* adapted to the Hungarian context was implemented and applied in the vocational schools involved (160). The Program contributed to a great extent to the institutionalization of quality assurance in VET and developed a national system based on the CQAF which was made available to every IVET provider (during 2006-2008). The schools participating in the Program had to

conduct self-assessment on annual basis against the **Self-Assessment Model for Vocational Schools** developed in 2006 as part of the CQAF adaptation process. The Model incorporates the CQAF core quality criteria as well as the *key indicators*² (28) and the *benchmarking indicators* (70) also developed in line with CQAF.

On completion of the self-assessment exercise, the vocational training schools had the opportunity to pilot the European **Peer Review** procedure³, a method of external assessment and evaluation developed in close relation to CQAF, and implement national and transnational Peer Reviews.

In order to support the CQAF implementation and the self-assessment exercise of the schools, the Program provided a rich supporting environment which included training of the institution's staff (2 persons per school) in CQAF implementation and self-assessment; guides, methodological guidance materials, such as the Self-Assessment Implementation Guide; expert support etc.

- **2006-2008: Adaptation of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) to the Hungarian IVET (school-based VET) sector – Presentation of some selected results**

With the aim to meet the provision of the Government Resolution nr. 1057/2005, in December 2005 a large-scale project was launched on the **adaptation of CQAF to the Hungarian school-based vocational education and training sector** (which includes approx. 1400 vocational schools – vocational training schools and secondary vocational schools). The aim with the establishment of the Hungarian Quality Assurance Framework of the School-based VET sector (in Hungarian Szakképzési Minőségbiztosítási Keretrendszer, **SZMBK** – see *Figure 3* below) was to encourage and support the implementation of quality management systems in the initial vocational education and training sector both on provider (school) and system (regional) level, as well as to link the quality management activities in VET with the relevant European policy objectives.

The adaptation covered **two different levels** of the school-based VET sector: institution (school) level and regional education / VET management (system) level. The reason behind this was that

1. in the latest 4-5 years Hungary has made considerable efforts to improve the quality of education. Priority was given to the institution-level quality improvement activities. CQAF provides a good opportunity to investigate that all we've done and achieved so far, to what extent meets the criteria set on EU level.
2. the regional education / VET management has not yet a well-established structure and operational framework in Hungary, so CQAF can be a useful tool in setting this up.

² Key indicators are mandatory to be measured in all vocational schools; they are able to show in an objective way the compliance of the institutional operation and the efficiency of operation in a European Union environment as well. The key indicators should be such that are able to underpin the continuous improvement of the institutions in an objective manner in order to support decision-making on different management levels.

³ Peer Review is a form of external evaluation with the aim of supporting the reviewed educational (VET) institution in its quality assurance and quality development efforts. An external group of experts, known as Peers, is invited to judge the quality of different fields of the institution, such as the quality of education and training provision of individual departments or of the entire organisation. During the evaluation process, the Peers usually visit the reviewed institution.

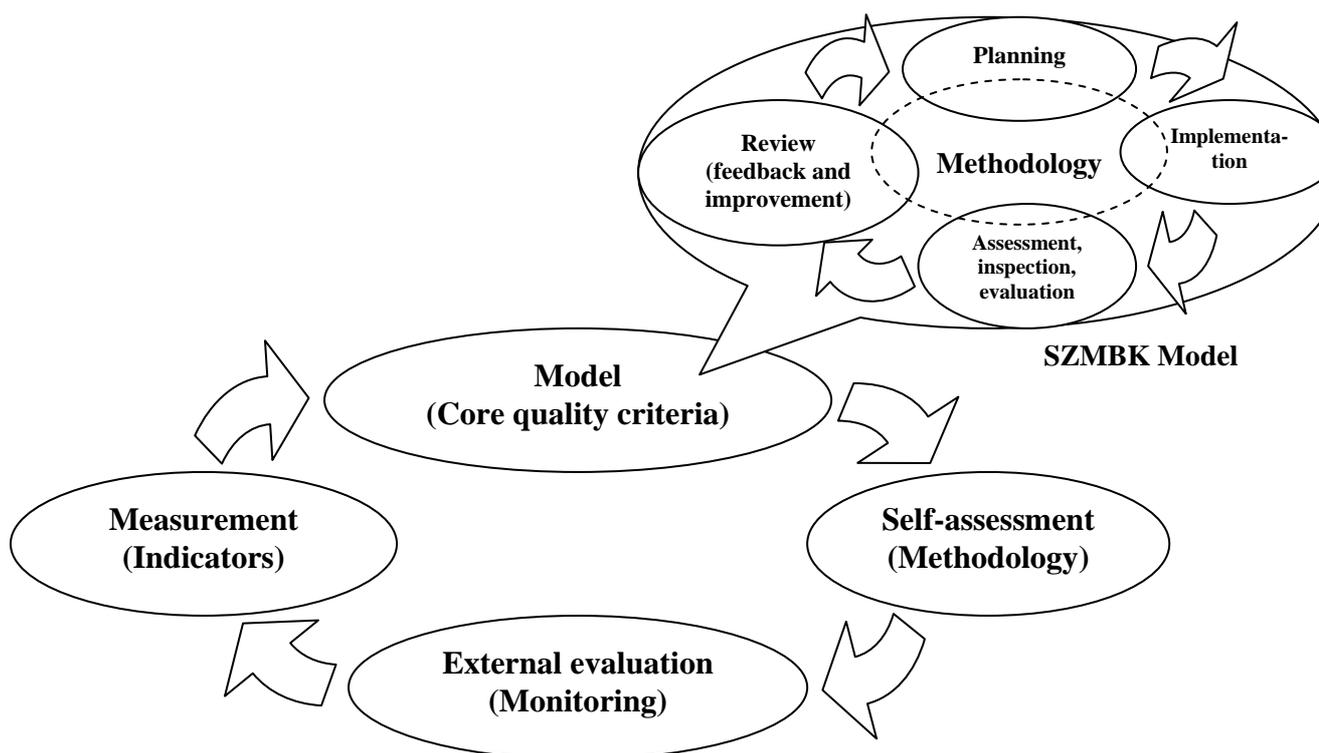


Figure 3: Elements of SZMBK

Model (Core quality criteria)

1. Elaboration of the Hungarian CQAF – SZMBK – Model of the school-based VET

- Interpretation of the key questions (core quality criteria) of the CQAF Model for the institutional level, with the aim to ease the common understanding and use of the Model ⇒ SZMBK Institutional Model (see Figure 4).

Key questions (core quality criteria)	Interpretation of the key questions (on the level of vocational schools)
1. PLANNING	
1.1. Are the goals/objectives of the vocational school clear and measurable?	<i>Explanatory notes to the key question with possible examples.</i>
1.2. What are the goals/objectives of the vocational school in relation to VET?	

Figure 4: The structure of the SZMBK Institutional Model

- Elaboration of a practical tool, the Guide to the implementation of the SZMBK
The Guide aims to provide practical support to the vocational schools in designing and implementing their quality management systems in line with the SZMBK which is

based on the European Common Quality Assurance Framework and adapted by considering the national peculiarities. It helps furthermore to understand what is the SZMBK about, what does it mean for the schools, and where and how can they find the core quality criteria of the Model in their operation / quality management systems applied and what they have to do to meet these criteria.

- Comparison of (identifying the relationship between) the key questions (core quality criteria) of the SZMBK Model and the major quality management approaches being in use in the VET schools in Hungary (like ISO 9001:2000 standard, EFQM Excellence Model, COMENIUS 2000 institutional quality improvement models I and II, Public Education Quality Award Model, Self-assessment Model for Vocational Training Schools etc.).

Our thinking was that as the SZMBK Model raises questions that are considered crucial for quality assurance and quality enhancement of VET and as such they are to be found among the set of criteria of almost any quality management system or self-assessment model (being in use in IVET in Hungary), it can lay down a common base for comparison and hereby play an **integrating role**.

Comparatory tables ⇒ SZMBK as an integrating tool

SZMBK Model	ISO 9001:2000 standard	IMIP Institutional QM Program	COM II. Institutional Model	PEQA Self-assessment Model	SZÖM Model
Here the key questions of the SZMBK Model are listed.	Here the relationship between the key questions (core quality criteria) of the SZMBK Model and the major quality management approaches being in use in the VET schools in Hungary is identified.				
					

Figure 5: Comparatory tables

Self-assessment (Methodology)

2. *Elaboration of the CQAF/SZMBK compatible Self-assessment Model for Vocational Schools* (on the basis of the already existing Self-assessment Model for Vocational Training Schools), by

- extending the Model criteria to all types of school-based VET (vocational training schools and secondary vocational schools),
- extending the Model criteria to all fields of operation of the vocational schools,

- revising the Model criteria against the SZMBK Model, and building in the missing SZMBK elements – core quality criteria,
- incorporating into the Model (Results criteria) the Key indicators for vocational schools,
- incorporating into the Model (Results criteria) the benchmarking indicators,
- revising the content of the 3 levels.

The Self-assessment Model for Vocational Schools is a complex self-evaluation tool tailored to the tasks and operation of the Hungarian vocational schools (i.e. vocational training schools and secondary vocational schools), their professional and operational characteristics. The Model has **3 levels** (see *Figure 6*). This means that the institutions can reach the level of organisation-wide (self-)assessment, i.e. the evaluation of their entire operation and meet the SZMBK core quality criteria gradually, step by step while continuously focusing on their pedagogical (education-teaching-training) activity.

- All three levels are based on the same model.
- The three levels / phases mean three different levels / scope of requirements.
- Each level has its own self-assessment tool / model.

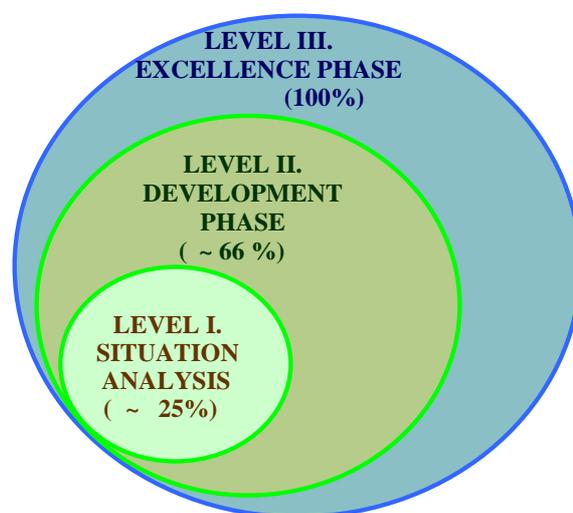


Figure 6: Levels of the Self-assessment Model for Vocational Schools

Figure 7 below shows the **scope** of the individual levels of the Self-assessment Model for Vocational Schools.

Criteria	Level I	Level II	Level III
1. Leadership	0%	60%	100%
2. Strategy	0%	100%	100%
3. Human resources	0%	40%	100%
4. Indirect partnerships and resources	0%	40%	100%
5. Processes	0%	60%	100%
6. Direct partners' results	100%	100%	100%
7. Employee results	100%	100%	100%
8. Society results	100%	100%	100%
9. Key performance results	100%	100%	100%
In total:	25%	66%	100%

Figure 7: The scope of the individual levels

- **2009-2011: Developing and piloting of an integrated approach to quality management in the Hungarian VET sector as a whole** (comprising school-based VET, CVET, adult VET and higher level VET) **in line with EQAVET.**

The Hungarian Reference Framework which builds on the previous good practices and results of quality assurance and complement self-evaluation with systematic and standardised external evaluation of training organisations **was designed in 2009** within the New Hungary Development Plan Social Development Operative Programme 2.2.1. titled **“Improving the quality and content of training”** managed by the National Institute of Vocational and Adult education (NIVE). With this **Hungary is among the first EU Member States** who aligns the already existing quality assurance systems in the VET school system and adult training with the quality assurance framework of the European Union (EQAVET).

The **Common Quality Management Framework for VET** (in Hungarian Egységes Szakképzési Minőségirányítási Keretrendszer, **ESZMK**) is not a completely new system but based on the existing ones, utilizes their best practices, structures and approach, while it is in compliance with the European Reference Framework and guidelines. This new quality assurance system would make institutions comparable, and enhance fresh graduates’ job opportunities in the national and international labour market. Comparability as a key aspect enables the institutions to get reliable feedback on the outcomes of their activities, and set a base for a fair and motivating competition among them, while it helps to improve the efficiency and quality of their training provision, too.

The **development activities** performed in 2009 and 2010 included

❖ **Elaboration of the professional methodology**

- ✓ Development of the Common VET Quality Management Framework (ESZMK) which is in line with the guidelines defined by the EU for Quality Assurance in VET (CQAF, EQAVET) and incorporates their criteria, elements.
- ✓ Elaboration of methodological aids, guidance materials to support the ESZMK implementation. A Methodological Handbook was prepared for the users (vocational schools, adult training providers and centres), which contains a detailed description of the system and its elements, the methods and conditions of the application.

❖ **Establishment and operation of the Quality Assurance Network**

- ✓ Selection and training of 53 mentors-experts (full coverage of all the 7 regions of Hungary).

❖ **Software and database development**

- ✓ Development of an on-line, user-friendly IT surface. This common database of the users makes possible the comparison of the results and generating statistics, reports as well as provides a platform for mutual learning.

The developed **Common Quality Management Framework for VET (ESZMK)**

- Is applicable to all levels and types of VET.
- Is in-line with the EQAVET principles and criteria (indicative descriptors and indicators).
- Is a common toolkit providing a common base in quality management of VET and for comparison.
- Takes into account and manages the special features of the institutions (both of VET schools /IVET/ and institutions adult training providers /CVET/).
- Supports the institution-wide evaluations and the improvements.

As part of the **preparatory activities**, the developing experts revealed and analysed the quality management approaches used by VET and adult training institutions in Hungary, their compliance, common features, characteristics, and the Quality Management related legal regulations in place. They also examined the conformity of the presently applied quality management approaches with EQAVET and analysed in more depth how far the existing elements on providers' level meet the EQAVET requirements. It was also analysed how the school-based VET and the adult VET can be brought together on the basis of quality management and in line with EQAVET.

The established Framework consists of 4 main elements:

1. Quality Policy

A Quality Policy is to be elaborated to provide a focus to direct the organization. It determines the desired results and assists the organization to apply its resources to achieve these results. The quality policy provides a framework for establishing and reviewing the quality objectives. The quality objectives need to be consistent with the quality policy and the commitment to continuous improvement, and their achievement needs to be measurable. The Quality Policy should cover the

- Definition of the mission and the vision of the VET institution.
- Definition of the set of institutional goals and the related indicators, definition of quality objectives of the organisation.
- Definition of the quality strategy, the aims of having a quality management system (QMS) in operation.
- Commitment of the management towards quality management and providing the necessary conditions for the operation of the QMS.

2. Quality Management System

The ESZMK Quality Management System has again 4 component parts:

1. The ***Common process model for school-based VET and adult training*** containing processes to be controlled in 5 Operational fields of the VET institution. These are:
 - I. Leadership - management.
 - II. Management of partnerships.
 - III. Management of human resources.
 - IV. Operation of the VET institution, provision and management of their other resources.
 - V. Education-teaching-training.

Based on the common process model the institutions define and describe (i.e. elaborate written procedures):

- the processes that are mandatory to regulate / describe,

- the other processes that have an important role in the operation of the institution and can be included in the group of regulated processes.

There were 20 processes identified that are mandatory to describe, most of them are applicable in both fields but there are some of them which are specific to the one or the other field. The table below shows some examples.

	Process to be described	School-based VET (IVET)	Adult training (IVET, CVET)
1.	Making the legal requirements known and observed	X	X
2.	Strategic planning	X	X
3.	Annual planning	X	X
4.	Assuring the internal procedure of the operation of the institution	X	X
5.	Self-assessment of the operation of the institution	X	X
6.	Identification of partners, survey of their demands and satisfaction	X	X
7.	Communication with partners	X	X
8.	Control of information flow	X	
9.	Customer service and handling of complaints		X

2. The *System of surveying partners' needs and satisfaction* includes activities such as
 - Identification of partners.
 - Controlling the communication with partners.
 - Surveying the needs and satisfaction of the direct partners playing a key role in and from the point of view of the professional training.

The VET institutions can define the methods and tools of surveying partners' satisfaction on their own. The tools for measuring the partners' needs and satisfaction should be elaborated on the basis of the criteria 6 and 7 of the Common VET Self-assessment Model.

3. The *Common VET Self-assessment Model (in Hungarian Egységes Szakképzési Önértékelési Modell, ESZÖM)* is a complex tool for conducting self-assessment and identifying improvement opportunities within the VET institutions. The criteria of the Model are tailored to the tasks and operation of the Hungarian VET providers, their professional and operational characteristics. While taking the specific features of the VET institutions (IVET, CVET, adult training) into consideration, the Model focuses

on the education-teaching-training activity of the VET institution throughout the entire SA process. The Model is fully compatible with EQAVET (incorporates the indicative descriptors and the indicators) and also with the self-assessment models used in other sectors of education in Hungary. The two levels enable the users to gradually introduce the model.

4. The **Common system / set of VET indicators** related to the Common VET Quality Management Framework (ESZMK) are included in the Common VET Self-assessment Model (ESZÖM) (criteria on the Results side). They include also the EQAVET indicators, the sectoral, regional and institutional indicators. The indicators are grouped in three groups:
 - Key indicators (K) that are mandatory to measure and present in the self-assessment document.
 - Recommended key indicators (AK) and
 - Benchmarking (B) indicators that are recommended to measure.The institutions develop and operate their own indicator systems based on these indicators which also include specific institutional indicators and indicators related to improvements.

In order to facilitate and support the use of the system, an **on-line Quality Assurance IT Database** (in Hungarian Minőségbiztosítási Informatikai Rendszer – **MBR**) was designed and developed which makes possible the Internet-based, anonym comparison of the performance indicators of the institutions interpreted, measured and calculated in the same way. For this purpose an Interpretation and Calculation Guide to the indicators was elaborated.

Beside this the system allows of making statistics and data-analyses thus supporting the evidence-based decision-making, and also provides opportunity for mutual learning by collecting and disseminating best practices among the institutions.

The preparatory activities for the implementation of the Hungarian Common VET Quality Management Framework were carried out and some elements of the system piloted in **1070** institutions - VET and adult training providers. They received 2x1 day free of charge methodological training and free of charge on-site technical assistance by mentors-experts.

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