

EQAVET Peer Learning Activity on ‘Quality Assurance in Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE)’

Online workshop on 7-8 October 2021

Project story factsheet: Quality Management System for VET Centres in the Basque country, Spain

Quality Management System for VET Centres

Project information

In 1994, the Forum Gipuzkoa XXI (association of three employers: Adegı, Elkargi, and UPV) proposed to Ikaslan Gipuzkoa to focus on QA in VET with the objective of setting up a similar methodology to manage VET centres than the one used by companies. The R4 network was created in 1996 and it was initially composed of four VET centres from the Basque Community region (Miguel Altuna, Martutene, Tolosaldea and Usurbil) which were the pioneers in designing and implementing a management system based on the rules of ISO 9000. Their joint work overcame the challenges of interpreting and applying the ISO regulation to an educational context which led the four members of the R4 network to obtain the ISO9000 certification in 1998.

After the certification of the R4 network, the challenge was to extend it to all VET centres of the Basque Country. With this aim, the Vice Ministry launched the SAREKA programme (which in Basque means: to work in networks). The programme was highly successful and brought relevant changes to all VET centres, increasing collaboration and knowledge sharing. VET centres were organised in groups of 6 to 8 VET centres which regularly met to analyse and reflect on their own organisations. By 2001, 21 centres got the ISO certification.

The Basque Government created an organism called the Quality Agency to support the adoption of the new methodology across all VET centres in the region. The key objectives were/are:

- To improve the management of VET centres
- To obtain certificates.
- To establish a teamwork methodology based on networking in order to share knowledge among VET centres.

The stakeholders involved were:

- VET centres
- Associations of VET centres
- Vice Ministry of VET, Department of Education, Basque Government.

In 2013, the Agency disappeared, and it was incorporated to TKNİKA as the Department of Continuous Improvement. In 2016 EFQM approved HOBİIDE as a management model. On the basis of its own management excellence framework, the VET Vice Ministry, through the Continuous Improvement department at TKNİKA, can issue EFQM awards in VET (EFQM-HOBİIDE) to those centres that exceed the levels of requirement. This made the Basque Government the first government at the European level to be able to grant EFQM recognition.

In 2020, with the last TKNIKA Decree published by the Vice Ministry, they become the Department for Complexity Management

Approach to quality assurance

The main quality assurance measures are:

- To work in networks of VET centres that support each other in QA.
- To designate a responsible for QA in each VET centre.
- To support their work through public organisms organically attached to the Basque VET Vice Ministry.
- To conduct internal evaluations
- To conduct external evaluations.
- To certify everything with the ISO 9001 (at least).

Which QA instruments have been used (at provider level or for the network)?

All the activities of VET centres have been clustered in processes. Each process has an objective, a responsible, a series of inputs and outputs, and measurement indicators. Each process is evaluated and modified according to the results of the evaluation.

There are two means of evaluation: internal evaluation carried out by the QA responsible of the VET centre and external evaluation carried out by an external agency, the Spanish Association of Standardization and Certification (AENOR, *Asociación Española de Normalización y Certificación*).

There are two main methodologies of Quality Management: the process-based management system (answers to the requirements of ISO 9001) and the integrated process-based management system (answers the requirements of ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001).

We use various tools such as LEAN tools (5S, Poka-yoke, value chain analysis, 5 whys, just on time, etc.), management books, process maps, etc.

Strengths and challenges

Strengths:

- To implement a common QA system in VET centres (regardless of the individual certification).
- To have the same QA references as in companies to build mutual trust. When the network started with QA, many companies were following the same path, they knew how difficult it was and they started to have more respect for the work of VET centres.
- To change the mindset of VET centres: they started collaborating and sharing knowledge.
- The new system underlines the need of monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the processes, which then made innovation a key element in VET

Challenges:

- It was difficult to interpret the concepts of ISO and adapt them to education.
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- Difficulties to onboard VET centres in the beginning. Some of them were reluctant to change their management systems.

Lessons learnt

Focusing the management of the centres on people, assuming as values, among others, teamwork, trust, respect, professional honesty, mutually beneficial relationships, shared knowledge, recognition of people who develop good practices, etc.

We have worked in knowledge networks, with Mission, Vision and Values, with a Code of Conduct, with Purpose and Planning and establishing the monitoring, milestones and controls necessary to ensure results, with a focus on achievement, establishing SMART indicators and objectives for them. Many companies, specially SMEs, were struggling to gain their certificates and it was very impressive for them to realise that VET centres were ahead of them.

Next steps/ future developments

The fourth industrial revolution requires a transformation of VET centres into intelligent organisations. We are defining this new type of centre, their organisational structure, and the management.

Further information

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Useful sources and resources: <https://tknika.eus/en/areas-2/complexity-management/>
