



Open Source Quality Assurance System for Vocational Education

The OpenQAsS project aims to develop an open source software toolkit for supporting the management of QA systems in the vocational schools and training providers. The main goal of the first working phase was twofold: to create a solid basis for the development of OpenQAsS Toolkit via a detailed requirement analysis; to produce a valuable study for use by all actors in vocational education, systematically revealing both the problems and good practice.

In order to analyse the state-of-the-art of the implementation of Quality Assurance (QA) systems in European VET institutions, partners in the partner countries (UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Hungary) have carried out a research on the implementation of QA systems in their respective countries, and documented their results in national reports.

In this newsletter we summarize the conclusions of the national reports, which are available on the project portal.

A Quality Assurance culture is spreading quickly in the European educational systems, driven partly by pressure from specific and recent national legislation. In most of the investigated countries legal frameworks concerning QA in the VET system have been released in 2012 and 2013. Vocational schools, colleges, VET and FET providers in the investigated countries operate certain type of QA practices, and in some cases there are governmental rules for them to implement QA components; these rules can be strict or more flexible (e.g. Denmark); furthermore, systematic quality controlling practices are regulated in some countries or in some educational sectors.

However, QA practices, levels of usage QA systems, QA criteria and indicators highly differ across countries as well as administrative regions or jurisdictions (e.g. England, North Ireland, Scotland, Wales in UK; regions and autonomous provinces in Italy; autonomous communities in Spain). They can also depend on the levels of education and on the legal form of the providers (e.g. *school-based and adult education is regulated separately in Hungary*). Finally, responsibility for quality control can be centralized (e.g. Scotland; Denmark) or distributed (in most of the countries, different ministries and institutions are responsible for QA in different sectors).

Nevertheless, two important facts emerge from the national reports:

QA systems and practices share common elements (a sort of *QA Core*, including accreditation; self-assessment/evaluation; assessment of the quality of teachers' work; school inspections). Convergence between different systems could be accelerated by the implementation of the EQAVET principles and components in the national QA policies in the member states, even though many states are starting now.

There is little evidence of an IT implementation of a QA system in any member state, with only few exceptions.

Some statements from the National reports clearly point out this matter:

There is little if any evidence of ICT support to the various 'toolkits' that can be found. Toolkits tend to be in the form of forms plus guidance [...] OpenQAsS has therefore started at a good time for the UK as a whole, but for Scotland in particular [UK Ntl. report].



The two systems presented aboveare focusing rather on administrative issues, than on operating QA cycles in the schools, or supporting quality culture among the schools' staff. [...] We did not find any IT solution for supporting the operation of the institutional Quality Assurance System in Hungary, what we intend to develop in the frame of the OpenQAsS project [HU Ntl. Report].

Positive insights arrive from the research carried out by the experts of University Alcala, who created a lists of QA applications and web-applications, and from the experience of a regional project in Italy. As a results we could select three solutions developed for providing IT support for managing QA systems in educational institutes (like QualiteasyEdu – Agora (<http://www.qualiteasy.com>), [ISOTools](#), [ReQuS](#) - Quality Network for the School in Lombardia.

The main conclusions for the next working phase OpenQAsS partners agreed, that the design of the OpenQAsS Toolkit should focus on the common components of QA practices and systems that have been depicted in each National report (the QA core). Specifically, QA indicators defined at national level, still referenced to EQAVET, should be used as a primary source of information for the OpenQAsS system; similarly, the system design should focus on some core functions which reflect the typical QA practices in the investigated country, as reported in the national reports.

Exemplary IT-based solutions should be used as inspiring source. The above listed application include functions that prove to be extremely effective to support QA practices in VET schools and providers¹. As a part of the system design, the experts will carry out deeper analysis of the functionalities and services of the selected applications listed above.



During the next month the Consortium prepare the program for consultation of the VET teachers as a part of the first steps of system design, the user centred requirement analysis.

Giovanni Fulantelli





Project

The OpenQAsS project vision is to utilise the potential of today's networking technology in all areas of the implementation of the EQAVET Reference Framework principles, and so make the resulting tools part of the daily practice of institutional Quality Assurance in our VET schools.

Target groups

- Teachers and headmasters of VET schools; managers and trainers of VET provider companies;
- VET schools and VET providers;
- Researchers working in the field of the vocational education;
- Software developers joining the OpenQAsS.org community.

Objectives

- To improve the culture of quality assurance by involvement of VET teachers and trainers into online consultation in the partner countries;
- To develop Open Source Software toolkit (Open QAsS) to promote and facilitate QA management in VET schools and adult educational VET providers;
- To develop a certificate – Institutional Quality Manager (IQAM) – for VET teachers and trainers who take responsibility for quality management tasks in institutions.

Partners

[iTStudy Hungary Educational and Research Centre for ICT](#) - Hungary
[Universidad de Alcala](#) - Spain
[AICA, Associazione Italiana per l'Informatica e il Calcolo Automatico](#) - Italy
[CAPDM Ltd.](#) - United-Kingdom

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<http://openqass.itstudy.hu/en>

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