

IMPROVING AND INTERNATIONALISING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VET



Quality Assurance Forum

NETWORKING IN VIENNA, NOVEMBER 2018

THE ETF FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VET

The European Training Foundation (ETF) established a Forum for Quality Assurance in VET in November 2017. This Forum is a transnational collaboration initiative between national institutions with VET quality assurance mandates in sixteen ETF partner countries. The purpose of the Forum is to support its member countries to modernise and improve quality assurance in VET by providing the context and means for peer learning through transnational co-operation.



THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ETF FORUM

The Forum celebrated its first anniversary in Vienna, Austria where the National Contact Persons representing fifteen Forum member institutions participated in a number of events organised during the EU Annual VET Skills Week. The National Contact Persons participated in the EU EQAVET Meeting (6.-7.11.2018), engaged in a one-day training workshop on peer visits for quality assurance in VET facilitated by ARQA-VET (8.11.2018) and attended a number of ETF Forum specific meetings during which they took stock of 2018 work plan achievements and prepared short-term plans.

To summarise the main outcomes of the multiple meetings, the National Contact Persons:

- had the opportunity to meet and learn with / from approximately 100 experts / national stakeholders (from all EU Member States and some EU institutions);
- deepened their understanding of EU policy in the field of VET quality assurance, the EQAVET Network and the EU Quality Assurance Reference Framework;
- engaged in debate on learner involvement in VET quality assurance ;
- participated in a much appreciated training workshop during which they acquired knowledge and know-how related to the organisation, implementation and exploitation of peer visits related to quality assurance in VET improvement / reform;
- reviewed progress on the attainment of ETF Forum goals - broadening perspectives on holistic and effective quality assurance and strengthening transnational peer learning as a means to learn and develop;
- started the planning process for the ETF Forum work plan 2019.

This report presents the meetings that took place and provides a flavour of the topics under discussion and the activities the National Contact Persons engaged in as well as their views.

THE EU EQAVET MEETING

The Forum's National Contact Persons appreciated the special invitation issued to them by the European Commission / EQAVET Secretariat to participate in the EU EQAVET Annual Forum.

Participation in this high-level event, organised under the Austrian EU Presidency, provided a unique

opportunity for knowledge deepening and international networking. The National Contact Persons appreciated the information sessions on the EU Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET. For eligible ETF Forum member countries in South Eastern Europe and Turkey, the opportunity presented during the event to avail of special purpose ERASMUS+ funding for the EQAVET Network was of interest.

Most importantly, the Forum's National Contact Persons actively engaged in the debate on the engagement of learners in VET quality assurance, which was the thematic focus of the event.

Thematic focus: the learner's voice



Over the two-day programme, several sessions focused on the importance of the learner's voice in the context of VET quality assurance. Topics included:

- Enabling learners to make informed choices on VET as a first preference by providing high quality information, guidance and counselling and direct experience of VET pre-enrolment.
- Giving learners a voice in VET provider institution self- and external assessment processes.
- Fostering learners own self-assessment capabilities regarding their learning and progression options.
- Maintaining links with graduates for feedback purposes and quality improvement (mentors, role models, information sources e.g. surveys).

Four vibrant sessions with panels of young people from Austria, Finland, Netherlands, Romania, Spain and Wales-UK, including student unions/councils, addressed matters of concern to them related to their desires for VET excellence (providing a rich and rewarding learning experience, leading to a job of choice, offering opportunities for further learning).



The learner's voice – ETF Forum perspectives

Following the EQAVET meeting, the ETF organised a reflection session at which the Forum National Contact Persons reviewed the meeting and exchanged information on the significance of the topic in their respective countries.

The fifteen Forum National Contact Persons provided 'snapshots' on this topic in their countries by answering the following four questions after the event.

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?
2. Are learners considered to be key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?
3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about were most interesting for you and why?
4. Was there one (or more) innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?



THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN ALBANIA LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

VET quality assurance and learner engagement is quite a relevant topic in Albania. There is an all-embracing political, strategic and legal framework that supports learners' engagement in different aspects of quality assurance in VET. Learners are considered key stakeholders in VET, as they are immediate beneficiaries of their qualifications, and they invest a lot of time in it. Formally, they are full members of VET providers' steering boards, enjoying great opportunities to work with VET providers in terms of planning and responding to review outcomes. A legal framework for learners' engagement is already in place but it is not being best used. This may be due to the centralist tradition of VET governance and the learners' still very weak capacity to commit themselves to and sustain their engagement in VET matters.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

There are many opportunities for learners to contribute to quality assurance policies and practices. They are members of the steering boards of VET providers, they are asked to share their ideas about strategic documents, ongoing policy developments or new initiatives; they are also invited to give their feedback on the way in which the curriculum develops and on the overall learning experience with the VET provider. Learners' feedback is used as part of the continuous monitoring of VET providers and especially of self-assessment processes. But, in reality, their contribution is quite low, in terms of being capable to fulfil their important role in developing and improving VET quality. Even though good practices exist in Albania for creating a culture of learners' engagement in VET quality assurance, encouraging them to demonstrate their understanding and to actively contribute to the various activities is quite challenging.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

Using good role models may change the outlook on certain issues. Choosing a good role model who struggled with similar problems, or had similar obstacles in her/his respective circumstances will provide learners with some answers to those problems and help them to stay motivated or inspired, and to find dedication, self-confidence, compassion, courage, and much more.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

Student engagement in VET takes many different forms: student engagement in the teaching and learning process, student feedback, student evaluation of teaching; student representation, student participation in the governing board; student engagement in internal quality assurance process and procedures, etc. Another example of innovative practice includes the occasional attendance of the principal at meetings with the students' council. In aiming for full learners' engagement, it is essential that learners be aware of the above-mentioned roles and perceive activities as being meaningful. Making use of role models for "innovative practice" needs to be systematically promoted in Albania, and for that some nationally prescribed procedures need to be developed and disseminated and in the meantime awareness and capacity building measures need to be introduced.



Ejvis Gishti,
National Agency for VET
and Qualifications,
Albania

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN ALGERIA LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE



Rachida Alitouche,
National Institute of
Vocational Education and
Training,
Algeria

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

In Algeria the quality approach in vocational training is set up and it is applied, the cycle of Deming is followed. But it remains a pending task to apply it effectively in the 3rd and 4th stages, namely the evaluation (Check) and the Review (Act). Indeed, the participation of learners must be encouraged they must be key interlocutors in VET quality assurance policies and practices at all levels (local and national) and throughout the different stages of the quality cycle.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

In general, learners in continuing vocational training are considered as key players. These learners actively participate and engage in quality assurance policies and practices through the various public and private enterprise organizations of which they are a part. Training committees exist within these organizations and participate in the definition of training needs and post-training feedback; these commissions are therefore key interlocutors in quality assurance policies and practices at all levels (local and national). They clearly express their need for continuing education development and provide feedback on all the related processes.

On the other hand, learners in initial vocational training are not engaged sufficiently in the policies and practices of quality assurance at system level. However, learners are actively involved in the life of the school. The regulations provide for learners' representatives on the School's Board and in this context they voice their opinions and suggestions on all issues that affect them.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

The practices of Finland are very interesting and innovative, but they would be difficult to put into practice in the Algerian context. Despite the fact that the training programmes are developed according to the competency-based approach (with the participation of enterprises) in Algeria, we continue to use the traditional evaluation system. But, we should discuss and consider further how we might introduce this new concept of evaluation.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

Hearing about these different innovative practices was very interesting and stimulating. Given where we are in Algeria in relation to this topic, I think that it would be necessary to concentrate, in the first instance, on VET schools. We could take measures to strengthen the participation of the learners in the different councils, already in place at this level, and encourage meaningful learner representation so that they can give critical and constructive feedback that can be taken into account. Having in mind that there are more than 1500 vocational training schools in Algeria, it is only from there that we could have a good national representation of learners as key players that could be involved in the whole process at VET system level.

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

The importance of the 'learner's voice' in VET quality assurance policy is a relevant topic for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will be strengthened to a large extent in the near future. At school level, the roles of the headmaster and the teachers are clear and respected but the learner's voice is very much neglected. According to legislation, each school is obliged to establish a Students' Council but it does not have any impact on quality assurance or the development of the learning and teaching processes in schools. In continuing vocational education and training (CVET), the situation is a bit different because CVET provider institutions have to make a profit and therefore they need to tailor their programmes according to the needs and demands of both the learners and the labour market.



Vesna Puratic,
Ministry of Civil Affairs,
Bosnia and Herzegovina

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

At present, learners are not sufficiently considered as key stakeholders even though legislation makes provision for this and various legal acts guarantee their key role in the VET systems. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are at the beginning of the implementation of the quality assurance model based on EU standards; its implementation through school self-assessment will ensure the learners' positioning as key players among stakeholders.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

In terms of practices that were very interesting for us, Finland is the best example. Education is competence-based and customer-orientated and each student can have its own educational path towards a qualification. This model of education is a very inclusive one. The second good practice is the permeability of tracks throughout the system. One has to be aware that the Finnish education system is one of the best in Europe from the perspective of both the supply and demand side. At this point in time, these practices are not applicable in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

We should start with taking realistic and small steps to improve our VET system. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we should secure systematic quality assurance in VET by ensuring that all VET schools follow the quality cycle and involve learners in regular school self-assessment through giving their feedback on curricula, programmes and the quality of teaching. The example of a National Council for Quality presented by Romania could be easily adapted and implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, involving students when establishing teaching/learning methods and elaborating optional programmes as well as in the self-assessment process and measures for improvement.

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN EGYPT LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE



Dalia Taha,
National Authority for
Quality Assurance and
Accreditation of Education,
Egypt

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

'Learner's Voice' is about considering the perspectives and ideas of learners, in this case as regards VET quality assurance. In Egypt, this is an important factor for the quality of learning processes. Measures to facilitate the 'Learner's Voice' are adopted for the various stages of education. Learner's Voice increases students' attention and focus, motivates them to practice higher-level critical thinking skills and promotes meaningful learning experiences.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

Learners are considered key stakeholders in Egypt. The Quality Assurance Framework encourages a culture of student engagement within institutional practices and feedback systems. In the VET sector, there is an accepted level of student engagement in the quality assurance of VET in institutions providing continuing vocational education and training (Level 4). Students at that level are represented in the quality assurance committees. They give their voice about different aspects of teaching and learning processes, about the education and training programmes and the various resources and facilities allocated to the education and training provision.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

There were various good practices to strengthen the engagement of learners, which were discussed during the EQAVET event and sounded interesting. For example, having an annual Quality Award for VET schools would encourage schools and students to engage in competition towards better quality. Learners also could be represented in a National Council for students with a consultative role in the quality of programmes. Moreover, promoting role models of high achieving students would be inspiring for other students.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

As a representative of the quality assurance agency in my country, based on what I heard in Vienna, I would suggest promoting an annual Quality Award for accredited VET schools in Egypt. Certain criteria for such an award should be developed and promoted by schools together with the Ministry of Education.

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN JORDAN LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

This is a very relevant topic for us in Jordan. Most VET providers & stakeholders believe in engaging the learners in the learning process, no doubts about this, maybe the challenge is how to reflect their voice in all the steps of the learning process and not neglect any of them.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

We in Jordan have reached an advanced stage in engaging learners in quality assurance practices; all VET institutions engage learners in one or more of the following methods:

- The School Parliament - elected learners' representatives, together with management, take decisions related to issues affecting learners.
- The Learners' Affairs Committee - elected/selected learners' representatives engage with management in decision-making related to many parts of the training process.
- Assessment and evaluation templates: all learners must reflect their thoughts and opinions about the training process at school and in the workplace. They assess trainers, objectives, curricula, duration, infrastructure, and other matters at different stages, for example on completion of a subject, at the end of the semester or the entire training course.
- Learners' feedback and assessment is sought directly before graduation or at the graduation ceremony itself when learners complete a questionnaire or engage in a discussion with management.
- E-websites are available for the learners in many of the training institutions, and some are accessible for other stakeholders to widen the circle and get more feedback.

The Jordan Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) enforces the requirement for assessment forms to be completed by learners at the end of training courses we also add one page to all occupational examination papers to gather comments or recommendations from the trainees.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

The most interesting practices were related to the vertical and horizontal permeability of the learners across VET and academic learning systems. These practices give learners opportunities to make choices and enable them to build on their acquired knowledge and skills. These practices promote equity, encourage, and facilitate lifelong learning.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

For long, VET in Jordan has not been an attractive path for students. One of the main reasons is that if the student selects a VET path he/she must remain in it. If VET students want to continue their education in the high school or university they have to re-enter the school system as the VET qualification is not taken into consideration. CAQA, together with other key actors, is putting much effort into developing permeability throughout the system, so the practices I heard about in Vienna are interesting for us in our work.



Adnan Rababa,
Centre for Accreditation
and Quality Assurance,
Jordan

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN KOSOVO* LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE



Avni Gashi,
Kosovo Accreditation
Centre,
Kosovo

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

Kosovo wants to increase the quality of VET. Priority areas include the development of a learner-centred approach and appropriate learning methods. Achieving our goals for better quality requires effective interaction between the teachers, the learners and the institutional environment. It is important to enforce quality assurance policies as part of both the VET institution's internal management strategy and those of other system-level institutions dealing with the VET curriculum. For Kosovo, improving the quality of education will remain a challenge for a while.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

VET quality assurance policy will only be successful when it reflects the relationship between the two key actors of the training/learning process: the teachers and the students. This relationship has to be based on strong cooperation between these two. In recent years, the education system in Kosovo has made progress on this issue but there is still a lot of work to be done. Learners in VET are increasingly acquiring skills and competences through practical work but the quality of practical work, and the monitoring of that work by teachers, needs to be improved. The business environments that host learners are in need of more supervision by engineers and/or experienced professionals.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

Measures to continuously monitor and cyclically assess practical programmes should be established in all VET institutions. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of the skills acquired undoubtedly brings about continuous improvements in the performance of educational programmes. This will also necessitate meeting the needs of staff in the workplace who want to continue learning whilst working. There are credible educational institutions that have already established standards for evaluation and for the quality of staff, which have proved successful.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

All the innovative practices presented at the EQAVET meeting were very good, but the innovative work of the Vienna Tourism School is especially worth mentioning. In Kosovo, VET institutions and learners are interested in implementing innovative practices. The Kosovo National Qualifications Authority (NQA) supports the promotion of practical work and other innovations in VET. The NQA organises workshops, makes presentations on innovations at various fairs in the country and promotes innovations in VET to businesses at home and abroad. With these actions, we stimulate our vocational schools and increase the interest of young people in manufacturing professions. Naturally, we expect our businesses to support VET institutions that have marked achievements in innovative work.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN LEBANON LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

This is a relevant topic for the Lebanese VET system and it is well understood and welcomed at the level of administration but is not well applied. Students have a certain right to express their opinions and make suggestions, but often this is not taken into consideration.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

For the most part, learners are not engaged in quality assurance matters. In some institutions with change-orientated directors, students are invited to make suggestions for the improvement of the learning and teaching process, but they do not play a role at policy level. In the higher education system, by law, students should be represented in the University Council but this is not enacted for political reasons. Students are given the opportunity to assess their teachers at the end of the semester by filling in forms that are given to the directors, but often their assessments are not taken into consideration.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

Continuously, work is being carried out to improve the quality of the teaching process and consequently to transform the institutions and their outcomes. However, Lebanon, already suffering from weak services & infrastructure, now has a high number of refugees (1.1 millions) and its population has increased by 25%. Given the situation, we more than ever need to promote respect for diversity, peace and economic advancement and combat radicalization with education. Education and training should aim at the students' wellbeing, not just at teaching subjects. This was the practice shown by Finland: students do not attend classes in the old traditional way that we know; instead, they are guided by teachers who take into consideration their background, culture and social situation. Students can organise their own process of studying in order to achieve a qualification. In this model, teachers are there to facilitate learning, believing that what is good for the learners is good for parents, companies and society. Other good examples were (a) tracking learners before and after graduation, and (b) training that prepares teachers for diverse classrooms.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

We are thinking of encouraging more student engagement through students' unions (the Romanian Model). This approach is more developed in Higher Education. The model presented by the Finnish educators is very impressive, but it is not applicable in Lebanon at this stage. What we can do is train teachers to understand better and value diversity. We can empower them to involve learners and listen to their feedback on the different stages of teaching, whether on curricula or the process of teaching or the process of evaluating. This also requires the development of awareness programmes for both teachers and learners.



Jinane Chaaban,
Ministry of Education and
Higher Education,
Lebanon

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE



Zoran Jovchevski,
Vocational Education and
Training Centre,
Former Yugoslav Republic
of Macedonia

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

Of course, the topic is relevant to Macedonia for the simple reason that, in my country, students are at the centre of attention in our education system and they are active subjects in all its aspects.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

Students are considered to be key stakeholders in VET but the question is whether they are accepted and treated as key players and whether institutions and teachers are ready to work with them in that way. For their engagement in the policies and practices of quality assurance, students are organised at different levels. The first level is that of the class, where students have representation through the class leadership and the class president. The second level is that of the school where they are represented in the school's youth organization. At a third level, they are represented in the national-level schools' youth organization.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

It is difficult to choose only one of the many practices for strengthening the engagement of students that were presented, for the simple reason that they all had their specific strengths and aroused interest. However, I would like to highlight the following: 'VET - a first choice', 'Learner-centered provision' and 'Getting students engaged' and the 'Use of role models'. Why? because I think that they are closest to the motto "Teach people not programmes".

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

What we have been working on in the past two years and will continue to work on in the next period in Macedonia is the design and implementation of work-based learning. Therefore, I was especially interested in the presentations on designing and delivering work-based learning from Spain, Netherlands, Wales and the EU Social Partners. What was inspiring for me from all the transferred experiences is the synchronization and matching of the needs of employers / companies and schools with a focus on students' achievements. I have some thoughts on how to apply some practices.

Where? In the context of the new qualification "Technician for Industrial Mechatronics", which is designed on the principle of work-based learning in a company.

How? By organising a meeting with employers and schools where the importance of synchronizing their needs and benefits will be discussed, with the focus on the students, guided by the maxim "Teach people not programmes". Employers and schools from two regions will be invited to submit proposals, developed in co-operation between the involved companies and schools, for modular units that need to be taught within the qualification. Both proposals will be integrated to arrive at a joint decision on the composition of the qualification for the entire country.

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN MONTENEGRO LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

This topic is of great relevance for Montenegro. Students' achievements are monitored and compared across all levels: class, school and national level. Moreover, secondary school achievements are compared with primary school achievements. During external evaluation processes, conversations with students are conducted to assess their satisfaction with their teachers, school management and employers. Students complete questionnaires and, based on their responses, recommendations are given to schools, to a certain extent, for the forthcoming period with the view of improving the quality of the schools' work.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

Learners participate in VET policy and quality assurance developments both at the level of the school and at national level. The voice of learners is taken into account during the external evaluation process. Learners have the possibility to join students' parliaments within the school. There is an active association of VET students at the national level, which, in cooperation with competent institutions, has been implementing certain activities aimed at better promotion of VET.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

The most interesting practices were Designing and delivering WBL – engagement with learners presented by the EQAVET National Reference Point (NRP) in Wales/ UK and Tracking VET graduates – benefits and challenges of developing a common approach to tracking VET graduates presented by the EQAVET NRP in the Netherlands together with the co-ordinator of the Tracktion Erasmus+ project.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

Since our methodology for quality assurance contains an indicator for tracking learners upon their graduation and since there is no effective mechanism for its successful measurement, we are considering the promotion of the Dutch approach and measures for Tracking VET graduates.



Ivan Marković,
Centre for Vocational
Education and Training,
Montenegro

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN MOROCCO LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE



Rkia Elmahmoud,
State Secretariat for
Vocational Training Ministry
of National Education,
Vocational Training, Higher
Education and Scientific
Research,
Morocco

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

In Morocco, starting as early as 1987, surveys for graduates on their insertion and careers and their assessment of the relevance and adequacy of their job-related training have been carried out. Recent measures include the introduction of soft skills development in curricula enabling learners to participate in the quality assurance of the training process. The competency approach involves the learner in the process of evaluation. Legal texts provide for the consideration of trainees' opinions in the quality process. However, the involvement of learners in quality assurance still needs to be made systematic and extended to all phases of training delivery of all providers.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

The learners' voices are taken into consideration in certain stages of the training cycle. In the transition phase from general education to vocational training the opinion of learners and their parents constitutes a means to judge the attractiveness and relevance of the training system in relation to labour market sectors with skills shortages. Graduate surveys have an excellent response rate. In conjunction with sectoral studies on skills needs, the results of these surveys serve to plan the training offer. The major training operators use opinion polls with apprentices.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

The involvement of learners in the governing bodies of the training school is good practice. This allows learners to propose measures to overcome the difficulties they encounter and managers to address them in the school's action plan. Graduate surveys provide information on the sectors with high insertion potential, the adequacy of the practical content of the training with the requirements of the jobs held and the shortcomings observed. This allows action in terms of training planning and training programme review. Students' and graduates' associations ought to be established in Morocco, with support for the holding of periodic meetings to prepare recommendations for improvements. "Evaluation of training and trainers by learners" shall be introduced as a criterion for accreditation of training institutions, requiring managers to engage learners in the quality assurance process.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

Some good practices will inspire two priority actions for Morocco. We will seize the opportunity of revising the legal framework to impose measures for the involvement of learners in governing bodies of training institutions ensuring proper representation.

We will enhance training to develop learners' observation, analysis and communication skills so they can fulfil their role as observers / evaluators in the quality assurance process. A benchmark has already been set to identify good national and international practices.

The next steps are (a) the production of a specific methodological framework as well as the guidelines for its application; (b) a study on the teaching materials related to some soft skills already developed to exploit them for this purpose.

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN PALESTINE*

LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

This topic is very interesting; it would be quite revolutionary to consider the student / learner as a key player in the VET sector in Palestine. It is highly recommended to adapt and adopt this approach in my country, especially at a time when we are preparing new policies and laws for this sector, in order to raise the quality of vocational education and training.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

In the Palestinian education and training monitoring & evaluation report, we have many indicators, but the indicators concerning the participation of learners in quality assurance processes is limited to the indicator that concerns the engagement of the students in practical skills development lessons. In Palestine, 3-year vocational education has been introduced into basic education demonstrating that different pathways are offered to meet the different needs of students in recognition that they are the main players.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

The most interesting good practices for me were those related to co-operation measures between the three main elements of the VET cycle (school, student, labour market). In Palestine, we have recently started with the work-based / workplace VET experience and new specializations are being created in response to the needs of the labour market. New curricula have been developed to provide for the competences needed in the labour market. I hope that we can activate an effective monitoring system that would allow us to take maximum advantage of feedback for the continuous improvement of our system. I also liked the idea of a body representing VET students and enabling them 'to raise their voices', like similar bodies that already exist in the universities and colleges.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

There were three innovations presented which we would like to implement in Palestine:

- raising the voice of the learners by forming a body representing the students,
- a monitoring system, including periodical surveys, to help assess the satisfaction of the students with their training and the satisfaction of the labour market with the skills the students acquired,
- activating the role of the vocational advisor / counsellor in the vocational schools.



Shireen H.I. Abu Ajeen,
Ministry of Education &
Higher Education,
Palestine

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the Member States on this issue

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN SERBIA LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE



Tatijana Glisic,
Institute for Improvement
of Education - Centre
for Vocational and Adult
Education,
Serbia

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

This topic is very relevant for the Serbian education system. The paradigm of learner-centred education is included in legislation, in a strategic framework and in policy. The topic is also relevant for quality assurance mechanisms. The VET system is based on several principles, which should be followed in strong cooperation with students, providing different kinds of support and inclusion mechanisms.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

In Serbia, students are considered as partners and their roles and participation are addressed in legislation. Students are organised in students' parliaments in every school. Students' opinions, attitudes and suggestions are formally taken into consideration at school level as regards programmes, textbooks, extracurricular activities, school atmosphere. They are consulted on different issues and they participate in the process of school development planning and school self-assessment. At system level, the process of external evaluation consists of indicators for which data from students are collected. Policy-making and system-level improvement of VET are areas in which students are not involved enough. Curriculum development and review also needs to be improved by including students' feedback. Monitoring and tracking of students' career development is not done systematically.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

The Finnish practice can be considered as a model for fostering a quality culture and facilitating constructive learner feedback. Students are self-confident and self-conscious and considered competent and relevant partners. They are encouraged to give feedback on an everyday basis; they do not leave the classroom until they fill-in an evaluation sheet. All their questions and comments are considered important and respected. Taking care of and supporting students is not just something written in a policy paper, it is a reality and clearly part of the learning process and everyday school life. Financing is also based on students' feedback. The use of results of students' evaluations is an integral part of the feedback system and has a strong impact on the quality of VET.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

Designing and delivering work-based learning (WBL) in Wales/UK is an example of how the quality assurance process is organised for WBL with a strong engagement of students. The national "Learner Voice Survey" is conducted as longitudinal research to assess the training / learning experience of students. A peer-to-peer approach is included in the annual quality self-assessment, which, according to students' reflections is appreciated and works well. Students find these activities meaningful, because WBL providers carry out surveys on a number of occasions during the academic year and they feel involved. Students' opinions about what could be improved are also used. At this moment, we are planning to develop a quality assurance framework for WBL in Serbia. The Welsh approach is inspiring and I will suggest including self-assessment measures by students.

THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN TUNISIA LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

It is important that we listen to the learners' voices at the different stages of VET system management (needs assessment, design of curricula, training provision, monitoring and evaluating learning outcomes). We need to take account of learners' feedback in the updating of curricula and the subsequent adjustment of qualifications in the national qualifications' framework. Learners' feedback is also relevant for the evaluation of work-based learning and in that context the role of VET graduates as mentors is important.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

Unfortunately, the consideration of the learners' voice is the weakest link in the Tunisian VET system and this situation must be improved. Quality assurance of services for learners should not be the reserve of the General Directorate in the Ministry. The Tunisian VET system respects two other stakeholders' groups involved in the "training triangle": the trainers and the authorities responsible for curricula. Many actions are undertaken to improve both the trainers' professional situation and curricula quality. Two big institutions work together for that purpose: the Tunisian VET Agency (ATFP) that manages the professional career of the trainers and the National Centre for the Training of Trainers and the Development of Curricula (CENAFFIF).

The Tunisian VET system seems to be in need of a specialised representation institution for learners to respond to their expectations and ambitions and help to make their voices heard.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

Two examples were especially inspiring: (1) The Welsh example of a learners' survey concerning their views on the design, implementation and assessment of training programmes. (2) The Dutch example where a monitoring and evaluation system has been established to follow up both VET learners and graduates to have their feedback related to the entire training process. Additionally, a well-established relationship between current learners and alumni provides a permanent communication on the matching of qualifications and labour market needs.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

The use of learners'-surveys to hear their voices and take account of their views is of interest. One of the duties of the Evaluation and Training Quality Directorate in the Tunisian Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment is to carry out systematic evaluations of the learning outcomes acquired by learners. The Directorate is planning an action concerning learners, we intend to focus on their voices vis à vis all facets of VET. We will take the main following actions:

- Discuss the idea of taking into account learners' assessments in the National Quality Assurance Committee.
- Draw the Minister's attention to this idea and the plan to make it concrete, when approved.
- Include this action in the action plan of the Directorate.
- Integrate the component of "learners' voices" (survey) in the evaluation procedure and prepare for implementation (methodology, technical aspects of the survey, partners, communication...).
- Co-ordinate with the designated institution to carry out the survey of "learners' voices" (in our context, it will be the National Observatory of Employment and Qualifications).



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Training and Employment,
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THE LEARNERS' VOICE IN TURKEY LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN VET QUALITY ASSURANCE



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1. How relevant is this topic for your country?

In Turkey, students are encouraged to take part in the quality development process by giving their opinions and feedback in both internal and external evaluation. Every VET institution undertakes self-evaluation and improves quality step-by-step, as part of a continuous process. School self-evaluation consists of nine main standard areas, one of which is devoted to "student output". Occupational fields' self-evaluation consists of six main standard areas. The nine standards to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of VET corporate quality are: school management, management of staff, learning and teaching, assessment, management of students, premises and equipment, information management, health and safety and equal opportunities.

2. Are learners key VET stakeholders in your country? How are they engaged in quality assurance policy and practice?

In Turkey, the quality management framework is applied at all levels in the school, to all aspects of school life and involves all the key players. Students are considered as key stakeholders in Turkey and students' opinions are taken directly into account in the quality assurance process. We monitor the views of the students' representatives, the sector representative for the fields and the parents of the students. Within the framework of self-assessment and internal evaluation, we aim to improve educational processes by taking account of the feedback received from the students. The data obtained as a result of regular monitoring and evaluation of students' work and performance in "workplace-based training" ensures that the quality of the workplace is measured.

3. Which of the practices to strengthen the engagement of learners that you heard about in Vienna were most interesting for you and why?

Of interest were the presentations that focused on student engagement through participation in work-based learning. Students' contracting with a workplace and starting to earn money from an early age strengthens participation in vocational and technical education. Fostering a quality culture was also a topic and vocational and technical education students are more successful when there is the sense of belonging. Facilitating students to be entrepreneurial and encouraging them to open a business is motivational. Students, trainees, alumni, employee and teachers are encouraged to engage creatively.

4. Was there an innovative practice that you could promote in your country and, if yes, what actions would you take?

In Turkey, enrolment in VET is decreasing and taking measures to ensure that VET is a first choice is an innovative practice for us. So the "Taitaja" event, the biggest event for vocational education in Finland, was of interest. This event attracts about 50.000 visitors every year. Students of upper comprehensive schools compete in craftsmanship. Some skills also have international competitors and students from universities of applied sciences. In addition, there is the "Taitaja" competition for students with special needs. In this event, entrepreneurs and companies meet talented young people who may become their future employees and the young people receive support for their choice of a career. We need to strengthen information and vocational guidance activities in Turkey to ensure that vocational and technical education is the first choice for students.

Summary

The ETF Forum National Contact Persons unanimously agreed that the topic was highly relevant, and all their countries have taken measures to address this matter. Amongst the conclusions of the debate were the following:

- Legislation alone is insufficient, there must be a culture of listening and responding to learner’s concerns and needs and this requires capacity building for: teachers, trainers, learners (who need to learn how to use ‘their voice’) as well as support structures and conducive climates.
- Make better use of indicators and data collection and analyses to facilitate and promote the benefits of giving learners a voice.
- Make learner involvement in school self-assessment processes mandatory.
- Research and development is needed to develop robust policies to empower the learner, capture the learner’s voice, maximise learner engagement in VET quality matters, build learners’ capacities to give structured and supportive feedback and ensure that the feedback is acknowledged and utilized.

TRAINING WORKSHOP ON PEER VISITS

Background

Peer Visits are intended to support the core objectives of the Forum for Quality Assurance in VET. They are expected to support the modernisation and improvement of quality assurance in VET by providing the context and means for peer learning through transnational cooperation. A Peer Visit is a form of external feedback from peers, with the aim of supporting the host in its quality assurance development efforts. Peers are invited to give feedback on the quality assurance measures selected by the host institution. Peer Visits can serve as catalysts for more effective:

- self-assessment of quality assurance approaches and measures;
- comprehensible descriptions of national quality assurance systems for non-national audiences



with the aim of increasing the transparency of systems for better transnational co-operation;

- national stakeholders’ engagement in VET quality assurance;
- external observations, critical observation, feedback and supportive advice;
- quality assurance modernization and reform.

In 2018, the capacity-building instrument *Peer Visit Guidance and Training Manual* was developed for the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in VET by ARQA-VET – The Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in VET in association with the ETF. The Manual, currently a Working Paper, provides guidance and a training concept for the implementation of Peer Visits that aim to support self- and peer- assessment of VET quality assurance measures. A summary of the Manual has been drafted and produced by ETF in the languages of the Forum.



The workshop

A 1-day training workshop to introduce the Forum National Contact Persons to the contents of the Manual was prepared and realised by Franz Gramlinger and Michaela Jonach and the ARQA-VET team in Vienna on November 8th, 2018. The main outcomes of the training workshop included enhanced knowledge and know-how with regard to: implementing a Peer Visit procedure; performing the role and tasks of hosts and peers; applying question techniques in an evaluation/feedback context and giving critical but supportive feedback.

The training was well received by all 15 National Contact Persons who agreed that it fully met their expectations. They gave top scores for contents, material, methodology and trainers in the final assessment. It was proposed that future training sessions be organized on specific components of the Manual with priority given to preparing peers to give critical, supportive and helpful assessment feedback.

FORUM MEETINGS



During the Vienna event, two half-day meetings of the Forum were devoted to reviewing the 2018 work plan, preparing the final activities of 2018 and making plans for 2019. The Forum members celebrated the completion of all the tasks agreed in the 2018 work plan. Amongst the 2018 achievements are developments related to expanding the Forum knowledge bases on VET quality assurance in member countries and peer learning.

Quality Indicators Mapping - Modules 1 – 3

Indicators play a key role in quality assurance systems. Indicators help policy makers understand if the VET system is headed in the right direction and if not, where it needs attention. The Forum initiated its

mapping exercise on ten quality indicators for VET early in 2018. Two modules have been completed: a) Module 1- mapping the understanding, relevance and coverage of 10 quality indicators and b) Module 2- mapping of the characteristics of data collection process of four selected indicators. The implementation of Module 3 on three more indicators is underway. The mapping is conducted on line and questions include: what institutions provide the data and how, from whom and how regularly are data collected, analysed and published.



Validation of country fiches

Monitoring and reporting on national developments is a core activity of the ETF Forum. National Contact Persons updated country fiches and validated texts for posters containing information on the 'status quo' of VET quality assurance in their respective countries. Areas covered include VET quality assurance and a) governance /management, b) qualifications standards and curricula, c) teachers/trainers professional development and teaching d) learner assessment and certification and e) evidence/data.

Peer learning

Peer learning has taken the central stage in the methodology to implement the Forum objectives and work. In addition to the Forum's knowledge-bases that are important learning sources, Forum members greatly appreciated the meetings and events that were organised in 2018 with peer learning as a primary objective. The ETF organised two peer visits in Turkey and in Jordan in 2018 focussed on quality assurance and work based learning and provider/programme accreditation respectively. Both the annual Forum meeting in July and the Vienna events in November provided opportunities to learn from and with EU Member States peers. The Peer Visit Guidance and Training Manual aims to ensure meaningful learning through peer visits. Between meetings, the ePlatform of the Forum that hosts the Forum's documentation is a source of lively discussion and exchange.



Countries that are members of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in VET

Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo (This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence), Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine (This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the Member States on this issue), Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey.

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