

The project

The QUAL4T2 project is funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ KA2 Grant program. It supports teacher teams in VET schools in their use of quality assistance mechanisms like the Plan Do Check Act cycle. We aim to use a bottom-up approach when getting teams aware of quality mechanisms and address teachers in teams as the professionals that they are. The development of prototype products mixed with indispensable teacher feedback tends to lead to a further change of quality culture and a set of final quality tools that help teams in further development of their quality mechanisms.

Project State of QUAL4T2

During the fourth semester of the project implementation, we have finalized the piloting and are now working to complete the final version of the Quality Guide and the toolkit. Moreover, we are currently working on storybooks and the transnational pilot report.

The fifth transnational meeting of the project QUAL4T2 was held in Koege (DK) from 19th to 21st September 2018. All members of the Steering Board were present at the meeting and contributed a lot to the achievement of previewed objectives.



Picture: The Steering Board

The partners

Landstede Groep

Landstede (NL)



CIOFS/FP

CIOFS-Formazione
Professionale (Italia)



Politeknika Ikastegia Txorierri
(Spain)



IDEC SA (Greece)



Koge Handelsskole (Denmark)

Successful pilots

Zwolle (NL), 3 September 2018. In this article a first insight is given in the outcomes of the Dutch pilot of the QUAL4T2 project, which took place from May 2017 till August 2018. Three vocational education teacher teams were involved in the pilot. But when all participants are counted, involved in at least one activity such as respondent to questionnaire, workshop or direct piloting of tools, 169 participants were involved in the Dutch pilot.

Eleven Quality tools have been piloted. After the presentations of the outcomes of the 0-questionnaire being tool 1, teams were aware of their current quality culture and also discussed the changes they would like to see or on what topic they wanted to focus, like feedback and feed forward. All needed to develop a team vision, in line with the one of the organization and the school. Besides this the focus was on the effective development of team year plans (tools theme B) and the plans themselves (tools theme C).

What are the main lessons that were learned during this pilot?

- All of three pilot teams made significant improvements through the pilot period. This is visualized in the final pp-presentations.
- Teachers feel more secure developing the year plan. They feel they understand better how to develop aims and control the number of them.

- All at least make the activities in which the aims are divided SMART.
- Plans are developed together, securing the involvement by all team members. By using open access methods for input gathering, it is much easier to get all members involved, even those with a very small job in the team, not present in meetings.
- All the team members have 2 study hours in the official team budget for reading the complete team year plan. Right after this 2 hour session, the plan is referred to in the team meeting. As a follow up, all members know the aims of the team plan and who does what.
- When starting with the new team plan start with one aim together with all team members. This provides commitment with the plan; everyone can ask assist by all, as all work on the same topic; this can be an aim for 3 months and after the first two months the team has a reason to evaluate and celebrate. After that all are used to work with the team plan and smaller groups can be responsible for a specific aim or activity, now they now how it works.
- Offer all teachers the opportunity to provide input for the plan. For instance, by placing empty posters on a wall in a team office, providing post-its and invite all team members to pass by any time they like and post their topic for the new year planner.

- Too many aims and ideas for a year plan? Why not develop a dynamic two-year plan. Prioritize your aims and activities to find out what should be done first. (tip: put all on post-its on a board and move them around while you discuss this in the team)
- It may seem less time consuming to write a year plan by yourself, but you may need all year to convince team members that did not work on the plan that your ideas are good.

When highlighting strengths and weaknesses we found the following:

Strengths: The mutual work on the development of a team plan increased. And the number of aims in the year plans lowered, what seems to lead to more realistic plans. It is too early to prove this with results, but in the I-questionnaires it is visible that teams have more faith in their plan.

Starting the discussion about what the team really wants to reach, helps to focus. Visualizing the wishes and needs on big papers on the wall in team offices was found to be very effective: 1 because all teachers had the option to be involved; 2 because all teachers could provide input on the moment that suited them, as these posters hang in the office for a week. Focusing in categories helped too.

Weaknesses: The pilots show that just sharing tools with participants that are not sure how they could fully use the tools, is not effective. If a team is not really involved because there are other problems in the team, the pilot is not effective enough.

A team needs to be able to focus on their culture and the effective team plan development.

Coming up is a training in which one teacher from each pilot team participates. The final tools will be introduced, all good practices will be discussed and participants will be trained to be the project ambassadors in their own schools, to support the long-term impact of the project.

Strong cooperation between management and teams

Koege (DK), 1 September 2018. In Denmark, there is a high level of freedom for the individual teacher when it comes to teaching methods. That means that many decisions concerning the daily operations are made decentralised in the individual teams. On the one hand, it is very good that the decisions are made where they are to be carried out and implemented, but on the other hand, it can be difficult for the management to support and help the teams in the process. Therefore, we have worked hard to ensure a high degree of transparency.

Naturally, teachers are absorbed in their teaching, as it is the primary part of their working lives. Consequently, sometimes important elements of the daily cooperation in the teams can be forgotten, because it is regarded as a secondary task. A clear and considered structure for the team work is therefore a significant factor to increase the quality – and it will of course benefit both teachers, students as well as the management.



Picture: Teachers prioritizing team goals

During the school year 2017-2018 we have, at our department, worked on strengthening the quality of the cooperation in our teams through the Qual4T2 project. Fortunately, both the teams and the management wanted to cooperate and exchange ideas in the process, which enabled us to make sure that we reached the best possible result.

Already early in the process, the teams decided that the management should be involved at least twice during a school year – in the beginning and at the end of each school year. The agenda of these meetings focused on discussions between the management and the team as a whole – for instance about resources, involvement of the general plan of the school, etc. By having this dialogue with a team, all team members have the same contact and access to the management.

“As a manager of the teams we have included in the Qual4T2 project, I am very pleased with the results we have reached together so far, and I will continue working with the good structure of the project”, says Hans Severinsen, head of the VET Department at Koege Business College. “I believe we have ensured that more team members have a say and are involved, and that everyone in the team takes part in a dialogue about common goals.”

Use of QUAL4T2 quality guide and tools in a teachers' workshop

Pireaus (EL), June 2018. From the 23rd to the 27th of April 2018 the training course “Evaluation and Quality Assurance in education and training” took place, organised and hosted by IDEC.

The course included a presentation of QUAL4T2 project and practical activities, based on QUAL4T2 tools.

The entire course was structured in order to give the participants new knowledge through an active interaction over definitions and examples from their own work experience. The tools of Qual4T2 were incorporated into the training design.

The course participants had different work experiences, teach different students and trainees in compulsory education and further education, and covered different roles (trainers, teachers, management staff).

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Picture: Teachers' Team Working

These differences allowed them to think and analyse all the quality assurance process from different perspectives. Each participant could enlighten the others with their personal experience, furthermore they could also receive the others objective view, further enriching their knowledge.

One of the pillars of the course involved the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle which sets the foundations to design an action plan.

During the workshop, all the participants, divided into two groups, established a set of goals, however, without proper planning, they aimed to achieve all the goals indiscriminately, without preferences.

Through the first step in the cycle (plan), the participants improved their ability to set SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound objectives.

After setting the SMART goals, they continued with setting priorities and developing concrete action plan.

The participants evaluated the QUAL4T2 tools very positively and suggested ways to incorporate them into their quality assurance system and their teaching practices.

Piloting with the HETEL team members – Team ownership

Bilbao, September 2018, ES. – In Spain, the pilot phase of the QUAL4T2 project started in June 2017 with five different teams. One of the teams involved was HETEL team of International Coordinators. HETEL is an association of 23 VET schools in the Basque Country that work together strategically on common issues such as Internationalisation, Dual system training, Innovation... Teams in each area meet regularly at HETEL headquarters but team members from the different schools bring their individual schools' needs and interests with them.

When they reflected on the results of the zero questionnaires, the team realized they were not very clear about the position they held as international team members in the HETEL team and how this differed from their position as international coordinators in their own schools.

By using Tool 3, the Lighthouse, the team reflected on their desired role within the vision and mission of the association (what light they wished to shine), what they needed to be able to do so and how they could proceed within their constraints and given their resources. They were then ready to work on the team's own vision and mission statement and on their team year plan.

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The HETEL team of international coordinators have greatly increased their feeling of ownership of their team plan. Now they are aware of their own responsibility within the team and of their role as both international coordinator in their own schools and in HETEL association. One of the most concrete outcomes of the work being done so far is that the team members have asked for training regarding the KA2 program.



Picture: Teamwork on year plan

Lessons learnt / Observations

- Inviting teams to establish why they exist and what they want to be known for engages team members and their energy. Visual metaphors like the Lighthouse Model (Tool 3) or a Risk analysis (Tool 11) inspires and engages a team at a different level and creates a sense of completion and satisfaction.
- Quality and action planning and revision, evaluation etc. doesn't have to be dry and drawn out to be effective. Establishing vision and goals is especially useful for newly formed teams but equally

inspiring for any team needing to reclaim their WHY (focus) or change the intensity of their light (actions).

- Ownership and engagement is fundamental for team energy and success. Tools and strategies to get everyone involved should be varied and non-time consuming - such as inviting ideas/comments/reflections over certain periods in varied groups. Relying on the same strategy continually loses freshness and implication.
- Getting everyone on board to create a plan takes time but is more likely to be carried through if people own and commit to what they work towards.
- All development work on effective feedback is empowering at all levels in any relationship and leads to greater team maturity and effectiveness.

International Pilot Report

Rome (IT), September 2018. The partners of the project reported the experience of piloting the Quality Guide and the Quality Toolkit in the International Pilot Report.

It contains: a management summation for the managers of any organization to have an overview of the opportunities and benefits out of piloting the products of QUAL4T2 project; a description of the activities previewed for piloting and detailed reports, in five national chapters, on the application, on the methods used, on the difficulties met, on the adaptations of and the feedback from the direct use of the selected tools in each country; an overview of the outcomes of the piloting from both a quantitative and qualitative viewpoints; what has been learned during the piloting and the

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necessary suggestions to review the guide and the tools in order to make them available to a wider audience at EU level.

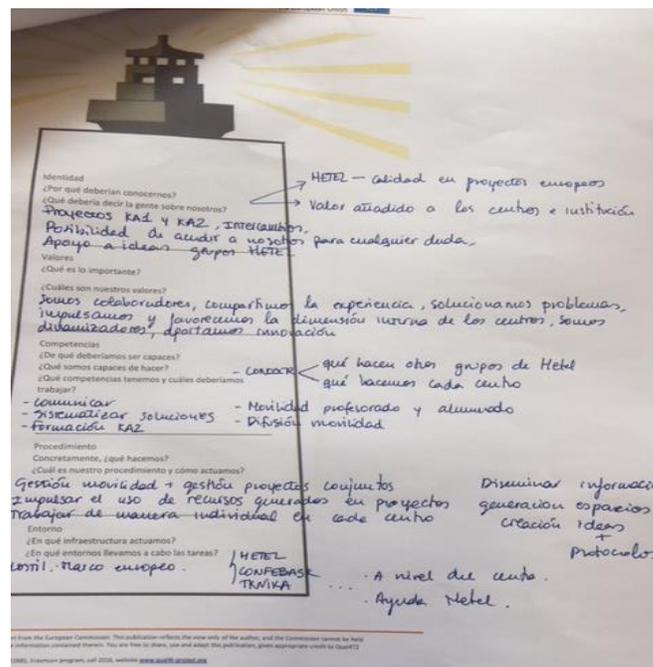
Here are some data: 13 teachers/trainers teams piloted the products and learn to design an annual team operational plan; over 285 the teachers/trainers from the partners' organizations were directly engaged in pilot activities; 456 professionals took part in at least one project activity; some of the tools have been already included within partners' own QMS.

For instance: in the Netherlands the tools have been integrated in the Quality system of Landstede/ Menso Alting, the materials will be used by teachers in the schools in the provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland and Flevoland (Kroese, 2018); in Spain the Quality Guide for Teams has been offered to the community of 23 VET centres in the HETEL association (Menica, 2018); in Italy the tools n°4 and n° 5 have been integrated within QMS of CIOFS-FP (Di Paolantonio, 2018); in Denmark the collaboration with the heads of departments have boosted the tools' spreading and the collaboration amongst teams (Dyrloev, 2018) and in Greece IDEC used the Qual4T2 tools in own training courses (Kazantzidou, 2018).

The final versions of the project products will be made available on the project website www.qual4t-project.org in all partners' languages, in English and in German, at the beginning of the next school year.

The website also contains information on the project, data about the project partners, details about the other project products, news items, testimonials and items related to the valorization of the project.

The international pilot report highlights ideas and recommendations on how to improve the piloted products which will be revised by the partners in a final version for a wider use and exploitation within a larger number of organizations in the near future and beyond.



Picture: A tool in use

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