

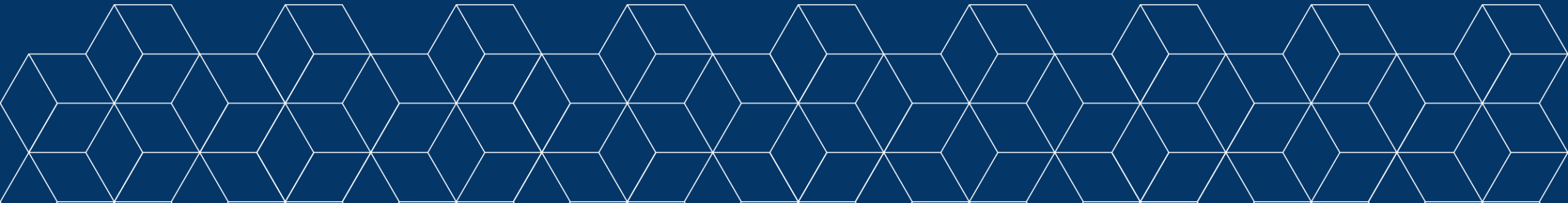


SELF-ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS USED IN VET AND HIGHER EDUCATION: LINKS AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Concetta Fonzo and Laura Evangelista - ITALIAN EQAVET NRP

9th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'23)

19-22 June 2023, Valencia



CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

METHODOLOGY

RESULTS

CONCLUSIONS



BACKGROUND (1)

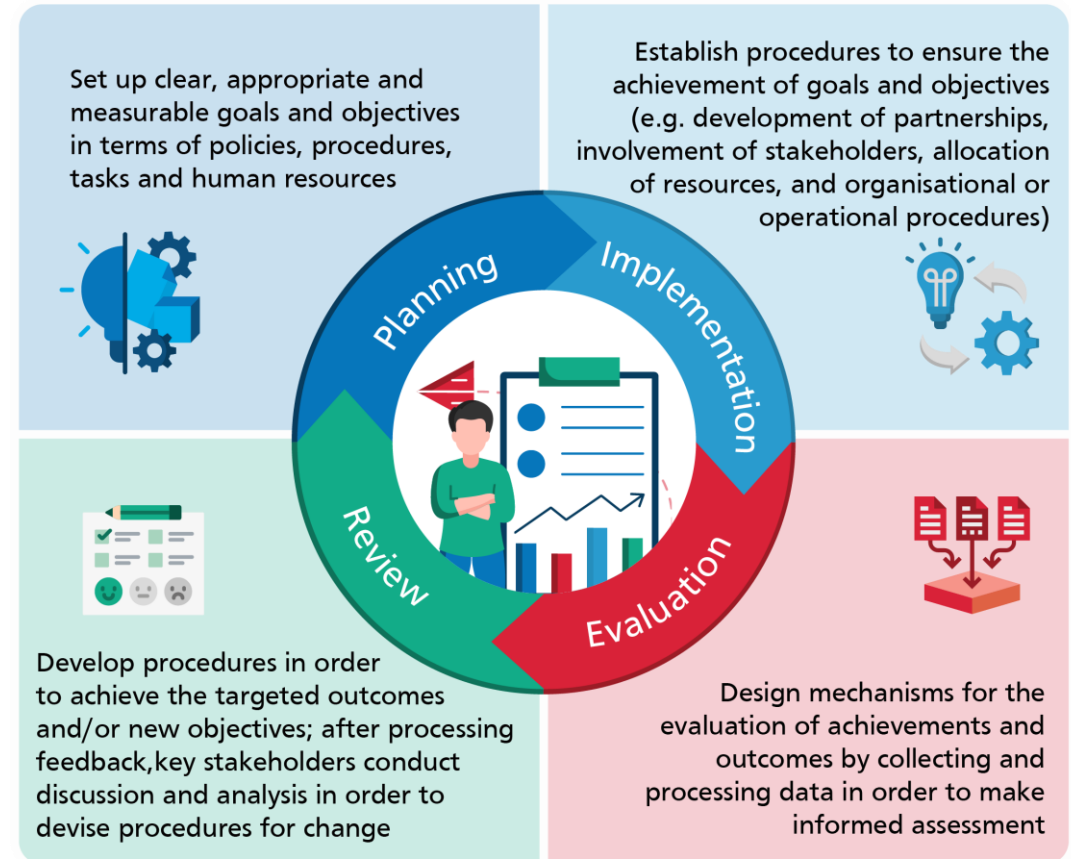
The **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)** emerged from the **2009 recommendation of the EU Parliament and Council**, as a European wide framework to support quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET) across Europe.

EQAVET is based on a quality assurance and improvement **cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation/ assessment, and review/revision)** and a selection of descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at both VET system and provider levels.

EQAVET does not prescribe a particular quality assurance system or approach but provides **a framework of common principles**, indicative descriptors and indicators that may help in assessing and improving the quality of VET systems and provision.



The Quality Assurance Cycle



BACKGROUND (2)

The **Italian EQAVET National Reference Point (NRP)** was established in 2006. The Italian NRP is located in the Training Systems Structure, in **Inapp**, in Rome.

The Italian NRP promotes a Steering Committee (National Board) which includes delegates from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education and Merit, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces, the Social Partners, Anpal as well as training experts and representatives of Italian Vocational Education and Training providers.

The Italian NRP **promotes the application of the EU Recommendations and supports the national process for the implementation and development of a National QA system in VET**, through the dissemination of a technical-scientific QA culture and the circulation of practices and tools for the adoption of a continuous improvement process.



TIMELINE OF THE ITALIAN EQAVET NRP



2006: the **Italian NRP** was **established** and located in ISFOL with the aim to support QA in a European and national dimension

2009: the EU **Recommendation on EQAVET** highlights the role of the NRPs

2020: the new EU **Recommendation on VET** reinforces the role of the NRPs

2021: the **Italian NRP** was **newly established** and located in INAPP



NATIONAL EXPERIMENTATIONS



The National Network I phase
2010 experimentation
ESF – NOP Convergence and Competitiveness
of the MLSP in collaboration with the Ministry
of Education, University and Research

The National Network II phase
2012-2013 experimentation
ESF - NOP Convergence and
Competitiveness of the MLPS

2019-2022 Experimentation
National Operational
Programme SPAO with the
contribution of the European
Social Funds (ESF) 2014-2020



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



Experimentation within the operational management service of the National Peer Review Network **between Scholastic institutions and Vocational Training Centres**

General objective: to develop an integrated system with quality areas and indicators common to the National Evaluation System (education) and to the European Peer Review (Peer Review – EQAVET).

Specific objectives: to plan and organize the piloting of the integrated system in schools and VET centers; to implement the experimentation at national level; to monitor and evaluate the outcomes for a future systematization and ever greater dissemination and adoption of the European methodology.



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



In 2019, INAPP launched a pilot project related to a National network of schools and vocational training centers, aimed at experimenting a new Peer Review model that involved both vocational training centers and schools with the following objectives:

- ✓ to facilitate the relationship, comparison and integration between the education and vocational training system, among different bodies - indeed - but which deal with similar targets in terms of age and training needs with a view to mutual growth
- ✓ to verify the applicability of the model in a "mixed" context of public-private relationship
- ✓ to raise the quality of the supply of education and vocational training
- ✓ to experiment and disseminate operational tools aimed at encouraging continuous improvement of the quality of the training supply: in particular, self-assessment and external evaluation among Peers



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



The activities planned for achieving the goals set for the national experimentation were the following:

1. **implementation of a Network** of actors in line with an integrated education and training system;
2. **training of teachers and trainers** on the new Peer evaluation methodology (about 50 among teachers and trainers);
3. **exchange and integration** between education and training structures operating in completely different territorial contexts.



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



The **precondition** for the national experimentation of the Peer Review that allowed the comparison among two systems: education and training, was the **revision of the evaluation tools** used by the European Peer Review methodology.

To this end, to ensure an effective implementation of the European Peer Review methodology in different learning and teaching contexts and to **avoid duplication and redundancy between the different assessment tools** (e.g., ISO quality certification) already applied.

The assessment tools were revised, integrated and modified with the aim of making them consistent with what has already been achieved by Invalsi (National Institute for the evaluation of the education and training system).



WHAT IS THE EU PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY?



The **European Peer Review methodology** as set down in the European context of the EQAVET network is **an external procedure for quality assurance** in the Vocational Education and Training systems in various European countries (among which Italy is included).

So, a **Peer Review is an external evaluation carried out by Peers** (in total 4), i.e., colleagues working in similar institutions or environments, who participate in a Peer Review visit at the premises of Peer Review host which is the organization evaluated by the Peers.

For the Peer Review visit, the evaluated organization will prepare **a Self-Assessment Report which is the basis for the Peers evaluation** and the draft of the Final Peer Review Report.



THE FOUR PHASES OF THE EU PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



The national experimentation included the revision of the following tools:

- gender mainstreaming – checklist
- **Self-assessment Report**
- **agenda template for the Peers visit**
- Interview Report
- fundamental rules for Peers
- Peer meta-evaluation form
- **Final Peer Review report**
- **sheet with the Quality Areas**

The work of integrating the Quality Areas/Indicators of the Peer Review, with main reference to the European methodology used in VET, with the columns of the Self-Assessment Report of the National Evaluation System, was aimed to maintain the structure of the latter in order to facilitate the adoption and dissemination in the education environment.



The work was structured according to the following methodological indications:

- **the adaptation of the evaluation tools based on the PDCA (Plan – Do – Check – Act) cycle of the quality assurance processes**, integrating the improvement aspects that emerged from the experience of two evaluation systems. Therefore, the first revision proposed represented the basis for proceeding first to a further "on desk" review and then to a subsequent phase based on the experimental implementation of the tools in the new proposed form;
- **the qualitative enrichment of the Indicators Framework for the RAV (Self-assessment Report for education)**, thanks to the specific nature of the European Peer Review methodology which searches for and analyses both quantitative and, above all, qualitative evidence, taking care to include the point of view of all stakeholders (teachers, students, administrative staff, parents, etc.);



- **the variety of indicators provided for each dimension of the Quality Areas**, which constitutes an effective learning tool for all the professionals involved in the quality assurance process;
- **further possible sources** that take into account the methods of implementation of the Peer evaluation methodology and are able to return the qualitative dimension of the evaluation.
- **the integration of different reference frameworks** which made it possible to identify indicators and sources for some areas for which they are not currently provided nationally.



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EXPERIMENTATION



	Tools of the National Evaluation System	Tools of the European Peer Review methodology	Note
1	RAV - Self-Assessment Report	Self-Assessment Report	The two documents have similar purposes and structures that can be integrated.
2	Column	Quality Area	See above
3	External Evaluation Report	Peers Evaluation Report (Final Report)	
4	Visit Plan	Peers visit agenda	Tools that are already extremely coherent in terms of structure and purpose
5	Guidelines of the evaluator	Rules of work for Peers	
6	School questionnaire + Grid for reading the Context and Process data - before the visit + the Grid for reading the results - before the visit	Initial Disclosure + Background Data Processes disaggregated by gender (Initial Information Sheet + Gender Mainstreaming)	The School Questionnaire already includes all the elements present in the Evaluation methodology



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EXPERIMENTATION



	Tools of the National Evaluation System	Tools of the European Peer Review methodology	Note
7	Satisfaction questionnaires (teachers, parents, students, ATA staff)		
8	Sheet for observation in the classroom		
9	Grid for conducting the visit	Interview report + evaluation guidelines + Meta-evaluation	
10	Form for identifying improvement objectives	Peer Review Improvement Workshop (Seminar for the definition of the improvement plan)	
11		Peers' application form	
12		Peers Agreement Model	During the National experimentation, it was not considered appropriate to provide for the introduction of a contract at this stage



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EXPERIMENTATION



VET schools and centers were identified based on the following criteria:

- **an almost equal number among schools and vocational training centers**, identified respectively in **6 schools and 8 centers**;
- **a balanced mix of VET schools and centers** between those who have **already had experience of Peer Review** and those who are **new to it**;
- **a geographical distribution** such as to ensure the involvement of schools and centers operating **in the** northern, central and southern areas. **To this end, the following Regions were identified: Puglia, Lazio and Veneto.**

The National experimentation began in September 2019, but at the beginning of 2020 the Covid-19 emergency brought about a halt in activities.

In September 2021, upon the reopening of the school year 2021-2022, the schools and VET centers that had in the meantime withdrawn were replaced.



THE EXPERIMENTATION DATA

With the start of the National experimentation, a first training session for Peers was held on 16 and 17 December 2019, followed by 2 hours online in January 2020 (reproduced in 3 editions to facilitate participation). The second training session of the Peers took place on 4 March 2020 with a second part which, due to the closure of the schools during the lockdown, was carried out online in 2 training sessions.

The training of each Peer lasted an average of 12 hours, with a specific dedicated agenda.

At the end of all the training sessions, 69 teachers/trainers from 22 different institutions including schools and vocational training centers were involved.

The visits of the Peers of the national experimentation began in April 2021 and ended in March 2022. **A total of 14 Peer Visits took place according to a specific calendar.**

As required by the procedure, **the Peer visits took place with a daily schedule of 2.5 days.** Due to the difficulties linked to the health emergency, a Peer' visit was held entirely online as it was carried out at a time when the spread of the virus was particularly worrying.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION DURING THE EXPERIMENTATION



The Peer visits were monitored using the following tools:

-**meta-evaluations**. In general, the tool proved to be effective in gathering the impressions and suggestions of the participants.

Overall, the role of the coordinator was fundamental for the purpose of a smooth and easy development of the visit: the degree of involvement of the coordinator was decisive, as well as her/his previous experience and awareness of the importance to carefully prepare the visit of the Peers.

-**observations**. An observation form was drawn up aimed at evaluating:

- a) the organizational and management requirements of the visit;
- b) the functioning of the Peer Review;
- c) relational dynamics between Peers;
- d) relational dynamics between Peers and the host organization (school/VET center).

The form was used by 2 observers of the project group who made a total of 6 direct observations (2 for each Region involved), trying to supervise both educational institutions and professional training institutions. In general, no particular critical issues were highlighted in the relationship between schools and vocational training centers.



THE EVALUATION OF PEERS



For the evaluation by the Peers, a tool was developed consisting of **a questionnaire submitted to all the Peers**. The action made it possible to identify suggestions and areas for improvement essentially relate to the following points:

- ❑ **the performance of the Quality Areas/Indicators**, the reading of which should be simplified;
- ❑ **the lack of some pre-requisites of knowledge relating to the areas of intervention** (education and training) despite the fact that the relationship between the Peers and the host was fluid and profitable;
- ❑ **the incentives for the digitization of the documents**, providing for integrated documents (to avoid transcribing the same information several times);
- ❑ **the lack, in the online mode, of some aspects of empathy** that arises from face-to-face contact and the ability to check the training environments.

However, the provision of an online Peer Review has allowed for an optimization of time and the possibility of reaching all actors in different places, making it possible to carry out the visit in all its phases.



THE EXPERIMENTATION RESULTS



The experimentation has fully highlighted the opportunities and strengths of the Peer Review methodology, which each of the Peers has directly acted and personally confirmed: **friendly approach, low costs, immediate feedback of meaningful and usable data, sharing of points of view and broadening of the horizons of the organization.**

A theme placed at the center of reflection in the conception and implementation of the project was **the possible cultural and linguistic gap between the world of education and training**, which could have forced the Peers group to a preliminary negotiation of meanings or to a tiring 'simultaneous translation'. By carrying out the activities it was possible to ascertain that this generally did not occur.

The central moment of the methodology, that of the visit on which expectations, hopes and fears are concentrated, was actually the most agile and fruitful moment. **Facilitated by the preliminary online meetings**, the visits took place within the foreseen times and methods and with the interested participation of teachers, stakeholders and students interviewed.



CONCLUSIONS



The Peer Reviews succeed in **bringing around the table people who act in different regulatory and institutional contexts** but who speak the same language and who move within the same horizon of understanding. This allows a **real evaluation, not only between institutions** (as always happens in Peer Reviews) **but also of systems** that enrich each other, in a logic of **contamination between public and private**, between training and education.

In the Plan - Do - Check - Act logic that characterized the experimentation, the next step is aimed to a possible **revision of the “Peer Review methodology at training providers’ level”** , in light of the completed action.

The working hypothesis goes in the direction of developing a new experimentation about "**An Integrated Peer Review between I-VET and H-VET (involving also Higher Education Institutions)**" that takes up the scheme of the European Peer Review (to allow for possible comparisons), but which has its own conceptual autonomy.





THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

WWW.INAPP.GOV.IT

