

“QualiTools in Practice”

Accompanying Study and Recommendations on the Usability and Use of the QualiTools products

(O7 Accompanying study)

Short report

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1 Introduction

1.1 The project “QualiTools for ICT trainers”

The project “QualiTools for ICT trainers” developed from research that showed that most institutional quality assurance approaches in education and training do not delve too deeply into the actual teaching and learning processes: The popular “satisfaction surveys” usually do not supply information on concrete didactical issues and what happens in classrooms largely remains a “black box” with teachers and trainers still working in “splendid isolation”. This means that the core processes of education and training are only covered in a superficial manner by traditional quality management.

The QualiTools project seeks to address this shortcoming by providing an innovative approach to quality assurance that focuses on the actual teaching and learning processes.

- The project’s primary approach is to contribute to the professional development of teachers and trainers and strengthen the pedagogical competences and quality assurance skills necessary in order to tailor training to learners, constantly improve teaching practice and ultimately increase attainment levels.
- In addition, the project also tackles the integration of this novel approach into the general institutional quality assurance system in order to support sustainability of teachers’ skills development and the creation of an organisational quality culture.

While the project targets ICT training, the project products, however, are also transferable to other areas of education and training (in particular VET and adult education).

1.2 The products of the project “QualiTools for ICT trainers”

The main product of the QualiTools project is a collection of methods that can be used by teachers and trainers to improve their training. The methods are available through an online database and a handbook. They cover first and foremost the teaching and learning processes, but also learning outcomes and learning transfer.

In order to support the integration of the QualiTools methods into the institutional quality management, a “Manager Guideline” was developed.

Training programmes for teachers/trainers and managers facilitate and support the further use of the QualiTools methods.

All project products are available in the partner languages on www.qualitools.net.

1.3 Activities of the project “QualiTools for ICT trainers”

In order to test the products, all partners organised valorisation workshops¹ for 1) ICT teachers/trainers and 2) QM/VET managers in their countries between June 2017 and March 2018. The workshops followed the training programmes developed in the project.

- Each partner held one workshop for QM/VET managers, adding up to a total number of 100 participants (between 14 and 25 participants for each workshop).
- Each partner held between one and three workshops for teachers/trainers; altogether, ten workshops for trainers were held, with a total number of 183 participants.

Additionally, EPRA organised two international webinars (in April 2017 and May 2018).

¹ The valorisation workshops were organised as multiplier events in the project.

In the workshops for trainers and managers, all partner countries were fully represented, with Austrian participants slightly overrepresented in the trainer workshops and Portugal showing a high turnout for the manager workshops.

The webinars were truly international and reached participants from 13 different countries: almost 70% came from the partner countries (with Austria taking the lead), the other 30% came from Greece, the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Macedonia, and Romania.

2 Aims and methods of the study

The aim of the accompanying study was to investigate the use and usability of the QualiTools products (intellectual outputs) in order to enhance their suitability and practicability for the target group, glean further information on quality assurance practices of VET professionals, investigate barriers and supportive conditions within VET institutions and finally increase further use, uptake and transfer of the project products. The study covered all project activities involving end users (teachers/trainers, managers, institutions) and all partner countries.

The study followed a mixed-methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative data:

Document analysis: A document analysis served as the backbone of the study. It was based on workshop reports and participants' lists as well as other documentation available (workshop programmes/agendas, minutes, flipcharts, presentations etc.). Main documents, e.g. reports, had to be translated into English.

Surveys: Comprehensive quantitative and qualitative feedback from all workshop/ training/ webinar participants at two (res. three) points in time complemented the document analysis. Seven different questionnaires were prepared. The T1 questionnaires for the workshops for teachers/trainers and managers were administered as paper-and-pencil questionnaires right after the workshops, all other questionnaires through an online survey later on. The surveys collected information on the participants, their expectations, their feedback to the workshops/webinars, their feedback to the QualiTools products (including improvements) and information on further (expected) use of the QualiTools methods and products.

Table 1: Different types of questionnaires

Workshops/ Questionnaires	Pre-training questionnaire	T1 questionnaire (day of training)	T2 questionnaire (three months after)
Workshops for teachers/trainers		✓	✓
Workshops for managers		✓	✓
Webinars	✓	✓	✓

Focus group: The focus group with partners was held during the 5th partner meeting in January 2018 in order to get an overall picture of the valorisation phase in each partner country and to analyse its weaknesses and opportunities. It allowed the gathering of qualitative data complementing the feedback from participants. It tackled questions concerning experiences with the workshops, the project products and general lessons learnt from the project.

Response rates of about 80% for T1 surveys of both the teacher/trainer and the manager workshops can be regarded as highly representative. Return rates of about 20% for the T2 surveys can be considered satisfactory for this kind of survey, but need to be taken into account in the interpretation of results. Response rates for feedback to the two webinars was lower due to the online administration and to the lower "exposure" of participants. Results can be used but the actual numbers of respondents must be considered during the analysis.

3 Main findings

3.1 Workshop participants

Female participants were overrepresented in all workshops and webinars: The valorisation workshops were attended by around two thirds female and one third male participants; participation in the webinars showed an almost 80/20 female/male ratio. This partly reflects gender ratios in education and training, but perhaps also the international aspects (and in the case of the webinar: the language challenge) attracted more female participants.

Participants were mainly (experienced) practitioners between 30 and 60 years of age (75% of all participants were in this age range). Among the participating trainers, 75% were between 30 and 60 years of age, 19% younger than 30, with an average of 41 years. The participating managers were slightly younger, with 69% between 30 and 60 and 29% younger than 30, with an average of 37 years. Webinar participants were the “oldest”: 86% were between 30 and 60 and only 10% younger than 30, with an average of 42 years.

Professional backgrounds

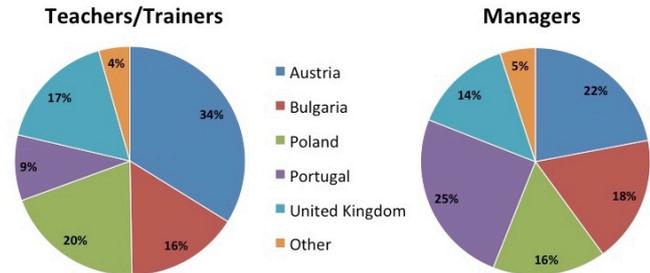
Professional backgrounds of participants showed that by and large the workshops managed to attract the envisaged target groups: More than two third of the participants in the teacher/trainer workshops were directly involved with teaching and training: as teachers or trainers (58,8%) or as pedagogical staff (8,4%). Consultants made up 15,3% of participants and managers another 8,4%. Participants in the manager workshops were (multiple answers possible) mostly managers (quality managers, general managers, HR managers, 74,6%) or education professionals, i.e. teachers/trainers (27%) or pedagogical staff (17,5%). For the webinars, participants' backgrounds were quite mixed which corresponds to the webinars' broad target group.

3.2 Organising workshops and attracting target groups

Partners undertook considerable efforts to attract the target groups: Workshops and webinars were advertised through different channels – from course programmes, website announcements, social media (Facebook, LinkedIn), European platforms (EPALE for the international webinar), to national and international newsletters, and direct information of targeted institutions through email and personal contact. Cooperation and partnerships with other institutions for dissemination, room organisation etc. were used to organise the workshops and deemed very useful by the partners. Directly contacting specific institutions (instead of general mailings) proved an effective strategy in meeting the target groups. Authorities and employment institutions were also involved in some cases to gain access to the target group. Two partners offered in-house trainings for targeted organisations/companies.

Most potential problems could be anticipated and prevented by the partners. In some cases it proved difficult to ensure that registered participants would actually attend since the trainings were free of charge. This lack of commitment was especially problematic for the first webinar. As a consequence, for the second webinar communication with potential participants highlighted the binding nature of the registration, leading to considerably fewer no-shows.

Figure 2: Countries



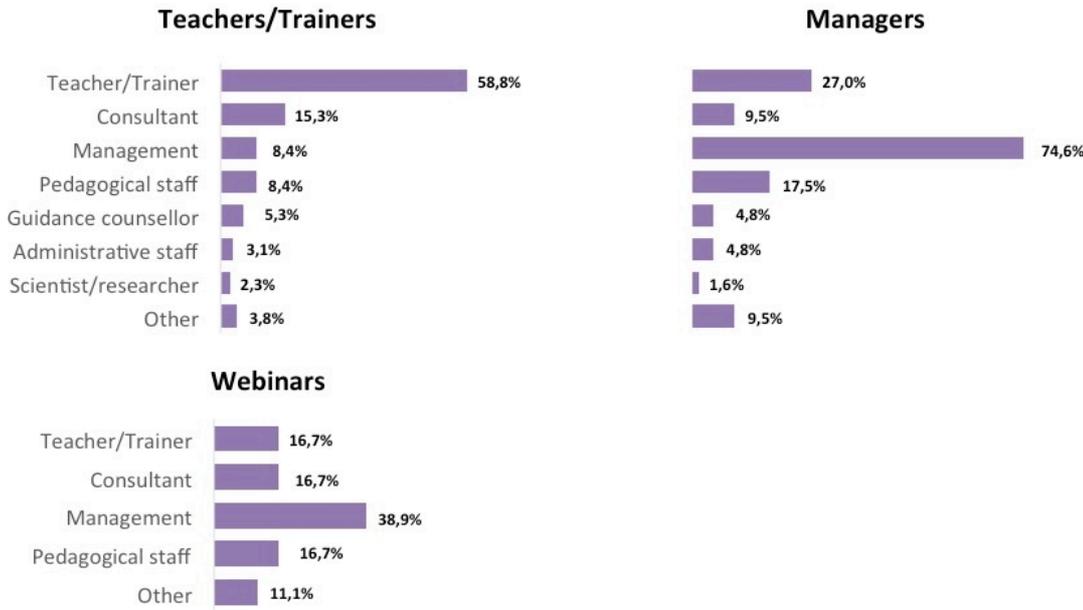
Sources: Workshop reports and T1 surveys for teachers/trainers (N=183) and managers (N=100)

Figure 3: Gender of participants



Sources: T1 surveys for teachers/trainers (N=136) and managers (N=76); sign-up questionnaire for webinar participants (N=42)

Figure 4: professional backgrounds of participants



Sources: T1 surveys for teachers/trainers (N=131) and managers (N=63), multiple answers possible. Sign-up questionnaire for attendees of first webinar (N=12, open question) and T1 survey for attendees of second webinar (N=6, single choice)

3.3 Conduct of workshops/webinars and feedback from participants

Implementation fidelity

The main elements of the **teacher/trainer workshops** were: a presentation of the QualiTools methods and active phases in which participants tried out selected methods. In some workshops, also a discussion of quality management and/or a reflection on how to use QualiTools in everyday practice took place. Overall, the workshops followed the training design provided by the project. Except for the first Bulgarian workshop, which was a two-day workshop, all other workshops took (about) one day.

The **manager workshops** by and large followed the training design provided with some national variations. The manager workshops in Austria, Bulgaria and the United Kingdom were half-day events, the Portuguese workshop was also planned for 4 hours, but took more time (5-6 hours), whereas the workshop conducted by the Polish partner was organised as a full-day-event (8 hours).

Participants' expectations

Expectations of **teachers and trainers** focused mostly on getting to know the methods, trying them out during the training and obtaining examples of their application for daily practice. Other goals, like discussing issues of quality assurance and reflecting on the usability of tools as well as receiving project information and network building with colleagues were of minor importance.

The managers had similar expectations: Gaining an overview of the variety of methods and their areas of application ranked top, followed by obtaining ideas and recommendations for implementing QualiTools in an institution. As with the trainers, the other goals (reflecting on quality assurance and usability of products, receiving project information and network building) were less prominent.

Webinar participants first and foremost wanted to gain an overview over the variety of methods, all other goals (like obtaining examples and reflecting on the practical use of methods, looking at methods in detail or receiving information on the project) were of minor importance.

Meeting of expectations and overall satisfaction

Expectations of participants were met to a very high degree in all kinds of workshops: 91,4% of trainers said that their expectations were met; almost a third said "very much" so. Similarly, 86,6% of managers said their expectations were met, half of them (43,9% percentage points) even "very much". The overall feedback for the webinars was also very positive since all of the attendees who answered the questionnaire indicated that the expectations were met. These results also correspond to the impression of partners/workshop leaders that participants by and large expected what was offered and were generally content with it.

Table 5: Meeting expectations

Workshops/ Expectations met	Teachers/Trainer workshops	Manager Workshops	Webinars
very much	32,1%	43,9%	43,8%
much	59,3%	42,7%	56,3%
not so much	8,6%	12,2%	–
not at all	0,0%	1,2%	–

Sources: T1 survey for teachers/trainers, N=140; T1 survey for managers, N=82;
T1 survey for webinar participants, N=16

Overall participant satisfaction with the workshops for teachers/trainers was very high with 95% satisfied or very satisfied (58,5 percentage points were satisfied, 36,6% very satisfied). Only 4,9% were less satisfied, no one was not at all satisfied. Over 90% of managers were satisfied or very satisfied with the workshops. Likewise, webinar participants showed a high satisfaction.

Table 6: Overall satisfaction with workshops

Workshops/ Ratings	Teachers/Trainer workshops	Manager Workshops	Webinars
very satisfied	36,6%	42,0%	53,3%
satisfied	58,5%	48,1%	46,7%
not so satisfied	4,9%	8,6%	--
not at all satisfied	--	--	--

Sources: T1 survey for teachers/trainers, N=152; T1 survey for managers, N=81;
T1 survey for webinar participants, N=15

Training Experience

Teachers' and trainers' feedback on the training experience, e.g. the structure of the training, the expertise of trainers, the training methods, contents and their inspirational aspect, the active involvement of participants, the usefulness of materials and the infrastructure, was positive: The percentage of positive ratings was between 85% and 97% for all aforementioned aspects. Especially the possibilities for active involvement of participants were rated very positively.

Similarly, participants of the manager workshops were also highly satisfied with the different aspects of the training; between 84% and 98% rated them positively. They were particularly satisfied with the trainers' (workshop leaders') expertise and the possibilities for active involvement.

Duration of training

The majority of the **teachers/trainers** found the duration of the teachers' training about right; the responses as well as the result of the focus group do not give an indication for changing the length of the training.

The **manager** workshops had differing durations between half a day and a full day. Feedback from participants on the duration was for the most part positive – regardless of actual training duration. If at all, there is some indication that the half-day workshops could have been longer.

Reflection by partners on the workshops

Partners reported that teachers/trainers were very open to the QualiTools methods and recognised the potential of the methods for their own training practice. This is also reflected in the answers to the open questions in the surveys. In one instance, however, teachers/trainers were reluctant to try out the methods during training.

Depending on the country and the way the manager workshop was conducted -- i.e. how much time was allotted to presenting or even trying out the QualiTools methods – partners had made differing experiences: some groups asked for more direct experimentation with the QualiTools methods, others missed the discussion of the Manager Guideline and the integration of the methods into their institutions, still others wanted more of both.

Knowledge before and after training

The workshops succeeded in imparting knowledge on the QualiTools methods to a very large extent for all groups of participants. Before the workshops, the teachers/trainers felt a little more knowledgeable than the managers: While 43% of teachers/trainers said they had knowledge of

QualiTools, only 22% of the managers claimed this. For both groups, levels of knowledge went up considerably during the workshops: 78% of teachers/trainers and 70% of managers then felt that they had “much” or “very much” knowledge about QualiTools. This shows an increase of 35 res. 48 percentage points in the “knowledgeable” category for the teachers/trainers res the managers. Information on levels of knowledge before and after the training was also collected from webinar participants directly during the webinar with similarly results of high learnings.

Table 7: Knowledge gains (T1)

Knowledge of QualiTools	Teachers/ Trainers		Managers	
	before the training	after the training	before the training	after the training
very much	4,17%	15,6%	6,2%	11,1%
much	38,89%	62,4%	16,0%	60,5%
not so much	34,72%	19,1%	43,2%	27,2%
(almost) nothing	22,22%	2,8%	34,6%	1,2%

Source: T1 survey for teachers/trainers (N=144 (before) res. 141 (after)) and managers (N=81)

3.4 Further use of QualiTools

Motivation for future use

Directly after the workshops/webinars, participants were highly motivated to use QualiTools (more) in the future: Almost 80% of trainers said they would do so, 20% didn't know directly after the training. Similarly, 73% of managers said they would promote the use of QualiTools methods in their institution in the future, 26% did not know yet. Almost all webinar participants confirmed that they would use QualiTools in the future (only one person was not sure yet).

Use of QualiTools in teaching/training practice

About three months after the workshops (T2), the use of quality methods by trainers had increased for 41,2% of the respondents and stayed the same for the rest. Asked about the actual use of QualiTools in their training, 76% of trainers had employed them in some way, mostly however to a (rather) low extent (sometimes or rarely). Mostly used methods seem to be the methods also presented and tried out during the workshops.

In the interpretation of these results it must be taken into account that professional practices are usually not changed radically after a one-day workshop. It seems promising that the workshops had prompted some changes for a larger part of the participants.

Use of QualiTools in institutions

About three months after the manager workshops, 7 out of 17 of the responding managers (41%) had actually made some efforts to introduce QualiTools in their institution. Those who had not started any activities mainly lacked the time. Since response rates for this question are very low, this result is not representative.

Use of QualiTools products

The frequency of use of the QualiTools products corresponds to the use of the QualiTools methods and approach in general (see above). 79% of the responding trainers said they used the database and/or handbook – but rather only sometimes or rarely –, the remaining 21% have not used these products again. Taking into account the short exposure of participants to the products and the pace of change in professional practice, this can be deemed a positive result for the project.

3.5 Feedback on QualiTools Handbook, Database and Manager Guideline

Both teachers/trainers and managers were asked about their views on the usefulness of the main products of the project, i.e. the QualiTools methods and – in the case of the managers – also the Manager Guideline. Not all participants already knew the products well enough to give feedback, those who could make an assessment, however, rated the products very positively:

88% of the trainers found the handbook „useful“ or „very useful“. The assessment remained the same three months after the training: 87% found the handbook (very) useful. Qualitative feedback for the handbook was also very positive. The assessment of the database shows similar results, with 85% giving a positive rating.

3.6 Chances and Challenges for QualiTools

The high potential of the QualiTools methods to improve teaching and training practices was recognised by both partners and workshop participants. Positive effects are: trainings that are better geared to learners, support of individualisation, learner engagement and interactivity, professionalisation of teaching/training and better alignment of the training process through direct feedback.

Challenges for the QualiTools methods can be found on different levels: The novelty of the approach and the required self-reflection can make QualiTools a challenge for teachers, whose professional attitudes and training may not be favourable. In addition, resources are needed and there may be a lack of willingness of learners to participate in QualiTools methods. On the part of the institution, challenges are manifold: Contractual relations, resources and working conditions as well as accountability-oriented quality management can hamper the introduction of QualiTools. The most important challenge, however, is the lack of knowledge and experience of QualiTools on the part of managers.

4 Conclusions and outlook

4.1 QualiTools Methods Database and Handbook

The QualiTools Methods Database and Handbook were deemed very useful by participants and are considered very suitable for actually improving training quality. For experienced professionals, the handbook is also a good reference book, inventory and inspiration for new ideas. The database is practical and easy to use. There is no need for improvements to either database or handbook.

Ideas for further development of the QualiTools database and handbook in possible future projects were first and foremost, the elaboration of additional methods in general and in particular for the quality dimension “learning outcomes and learning transfer”. Also specific methods for training areas other than ICT could be developed: a need for special methods for trainings in handicrafts was detected, possibly also for trainings for low-skilled learners and youth. New ways of presenting the methods could be explored, e.g. in videos in the online database for easy access. The database itself could be further developed to offer the possibility of downloading individual methods. The keyword search could be optimised and the introduction of additional filters could be considered.

4.2 Manager Guideline

The short and concise manager guideline was also considered very useful and inspirational by both participants and partners. No improvement needs were detected.

Ideas how to further develop the manager guideline mainly focus on adding further case studies, practical examples and testimonials to support the target group and to make the guideline „less

abstract“. Since all suitable case studies researched in the project had been fully used in the text of the guideline, this would call for more research or – even better – co-development of the guideline together with institutions that are trying to implement QualiTools.

4.3 Training programmes (workshops) and their implementation in the partner countries

The training programmes/workshops for teachers/trainers and managers proved adequate. Participants were satisfied, learning was visible, and the workshops also prompted further use of the QualiTools methods. In the teacher/trainer workshops, the hands-on approach with a lot of role-play and simulation was very suitable for developing practical competences in using the methods. Changes to the training design developed in the project are not necessary.

The manager workshop design also worked well during the piloting and participants were satisfied. Since managers' training needs are diversified, future trainings could be more tailored – the training design already foresees a variation of the manager workshops that would combine a training in QualiTools methods with the manager training.

The webinars offered an additional opportunity to get to know QualiTools. They can provide a first overview and arouse interest, perhaps instil inspiration to try out the methods. They cannot, however, be a substitute for face-to-face trainings. Their main value lies in offering a “first point of contact” with QualiTools and they make an interesting tool for dissemination and advertising.

Ideas for further or new developments mainly concentrated on tailoring trainings for special target groups of trainers – this also ties in with the possible development of specific methods for particular subject/training areas. Series of webinars (or videos of methods) and online-tutoring would provide an additional avenue for reaching target groups and imparting basic skills in using QualiTools.

4.4 Promotion and use of QualiTools

Promoting the use of QualiTools as an innovative and still little known approach to quality assurance first and foremost means awareness raising for the QualiTools methods. Different avenues were discussed by partners res. proposed by participants in the questionnaires: They range from traditional dissemination activities to make the products more visible to directly targeting of education and training institutions, in particular also institutions offering initial or continued training for teachers/trainers. Promotion should not only target teachers and trainers, but also focus on managers as gatekeepers. The best promotion would be further QualiTools workshops and trainings that allow teachers/trainers – but also managers – to become acquainted with the methods and learn to apply them in their own practice. Further webinars could be a low-cost means of disseminating the QualiTools approach.

5 Documents and (re)sources used

5.1 QualiTools Products

Improve Your Teaching! 65 Methods for Quality Assurance in IT Training. (“QualiTools Handbook”).

QualiTools Methods Database

Managing the Use of QualiTools in Institutions of Education and Training in ICT – and beyond. A Guideline, Vienna 2017. (“Manager Guideline”)

Training Programme for Managers (O4)

F2F Training Programme and Webinar for ICT Teachers and Trainers (O5)

www.qualitools.net

5.2 Project documentation

Reports on manager workshops, other documentation (agenda, ppt, participants lists, photos, flip-chart documentation) (AT, BG, PL, PT, UK) (O4)

Reports on trainer/teacher workshops, other documentation (agenda, ppt, participants lists, photos, flip-chart documentation) etc. (AT, BG, PL, PT, UK) (O5)

Documentation of webinars (ppt, participants lists, video) (O5)

Focus Group protocol

5.3 Surveys

T1 teacher/trainer survey

T2 teacher/trainer survey

T1 manager survey

T2 manager survey

Webinar sign-up

Pre-training questionnaire webinar

T1 webinar survey

T2 webinar survey