Newsletter
QualiTools for IT-Trainers

QUALI TOOLS

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IMPROVING THE LEARNING PROCESS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND LEARNING TRANSFER IN IT TRAINING

INTERVIEW

with Karin Steiner, representative of the Austrian project partner on the original motivation to design and initiate the project QualiTools together with the European Peer Review Association and the University of Social Sciences in Lodz:

I: *What was the original motivation to design the project QualiTools?*

Karin Steiner: I have read a lot on quality management and the main criticism was that it does not effect the quality of the actual training provision. Quality assurance is mostly associated with feedback ("satisfaction") questionnaires Yet nothing much happens with the results of these questionnaires. One reason is that these questionnaires usually do not provide meaningful information for the training process itself.

In the field of training some quality certificates like the German LQW have a slight effect on the actual training process. Institutions with this certificate require trainers to be regularly observed by a colleague during the training and to get detailed feedback according to a standardised observation instrument. This is a step in the right direction.

I: *So what specifically is different to other quality projects and compared to established quality certificates?*

Karin Steiner: We want to provide quality assurance tools for trainers so that the training quality itself will be better in the future.

This includes, for example: gleaning the expectations of the participants, finding out about their previously acquired knowledge, reflecting learning processes, exchange on training quality issues among colleagues, assuring learning transfer into everyday work practice, interim and final feedback methods.

I: *Why specifically did you choose the training sector for quality assurance? What does it make so interesting for you?*

Karin Steiner: Well the whole service sector is different to production of goods. Quality assurance when producing a tooth brush is comparably simple to quality assurance in a training course. As in other related fields of activity, like guidance, school education or social work, the client/participant is part of the "service" activiy in a training setting and therefore of the service quality itself. No matter what the teacher, the trainer or the social worker does, the outcome will be affected by the motivation, the willingness of the customer/client to cooperate. This is why quality assurance always has to involve the target group itself to a large extent.

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I: *How come that the project was initiated by an Austrian organisation?*

Karin Steiner: 2 years ago ABIF created the QualiTools handbook on behalf of the Public Employment Service of Austria. In this handbook we gathered 60 methods on quality assurance that can be used by any trainer in VET. This is just a selection of what has already been published in German speaking countries since the seventies and eighties and had since been further developed continuously. In many other EU countries these tools are not familiar.

I: *But haven't any other EU projects worked on the quality of the training process within the scope of the Leonardo da Vinci programme or other EU programmes?*

Karin Steiner: There were indeed some (but not many) EU projects with the goal to develop quality assurance tools to be applied within the training situation, like Resyfac, Qualivet and SEALLL. QualiTools will refer to these methods, adapt them to the ICT sector, use some methods derived from the Austrian QualiTools handbook and find even more tools already applied in the UK, in Portugal, in Poland and Bulgaria. Altogether we will publish 50 tools in 5 EU languages in a database, a pdf and a hardcopy handbook. These tools will be tested nationally in each partner country with IT trainers within 2 face-to-face workshops and in 2 international webinars. An accompanying study will show how useful the tools are.

I: *QualiTools focuses on the quality assurance of IT training? How come that you chose this field?*

Karin Steiner: The quality tools we will develop with the other project partners will be assessed and adapted for the ICT sector but they will be easily transferable to other training sectors. The ICT sector is an innovative training sector with continuously changing training contents. Trainers in this field often work by themselves and can freely decide whether or not they use quality assurance methods.

Website: www.qualitools.net

BASIC DATA OF QUALITOOLS

Project partners:

- ✓ University of Social Sciences – Społeczna Akademia Nauk - Marta Kedzia (co-ordinator)
- ✓ ABIF (analysis consulting and interdisciplinary research) – Karin Steiner
- ✓ European Peer Review Association – EPRA – Maria Gutknecht-Gmeiner
- ✓ Bridging to the future Ltd (UK) – Duncan Chamberlain, Daniel Zastawny
- ✓ CECOA – Center for Professional Training in Commerce and Trade (Portugal) – Vanda Garcia Vieira & Cristina Dimas
- ✓ Znanie – Radosveta Drakeva, Valentina Georgieva

Project duration: 09/2015-08/2018

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FIRST PROJECT MEETING

Our first project meeting in Lodz in mid October 2015, Poland where the project co-ordinator the University of Social Sciences is located, has a long industrial history in textile industry. We stayed at the Andels hotel close to the manu-factura, the restored 19th century buildings of the former factory of Izrael Poznański. The Museum of the Factory gives an overview of the history of the city.

In this meeting we discussed the results of first interviews with IT trainers carried out in each partner country in order to find out what kind of **quality challenges** exist **in IT training courses and curricula.** One common aspect was that IT trainers in all countries discern the problem of **heterogenous knowledge and skills of participants.** Moreover, differing expectations of partcipants influence the quality of training.

FIRST PROJECT OUTCOME

Our first project product is a **national report on quality tools and QA challenges of introducing bottom-up QA practices in each partner country** (Austria, Bulgaria, UK, Portugal and the UK).

Each of the reports will discuss quality assurance challenges in IT training organisations, specifically within the training itself. It describes QA tools already in use in ICT training providers and gives a detailed account of the need for QA tools. Finally, different existing QA tools are described a selection of which will afterwards be translated into the different project languages and provided for common use in the QualiTools database

Link to the website: www.qualitools.net

QUALITY AREAS THE QUALITOOLS METHODS WILL COVER

- ❖ Getting to know expectations and knowledge of the training participants
- ❖ Getting interim and final feedback by the participants
- ❖ Preparation, documentation and reflection of learning processes
- ❖ Reflection among trainers on training problems and quality

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NEXT STEPS

Within the next year we will create a **multilingual methods database for IT trainers** and test the methods in national workshops in all partner countries. IT training managers will receive a **manual** for the implementation of these methods which will be tested in a half-day workshop and two international webinars. An **accompanying study** will guarantee that the tools are of high quality and will attractive for use in practice by IT trainers.

Get the latest news on QualiTools project results and share own projects and ideas with us!