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“CHALLENGES FOR HIGH QUALITY OF ADULT EDUCATION”**

**Peer Review Methodology to Assess the Quality
of Adult Education Provision and Offer**

Claudio Vitali, INAPP - Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche



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SOURCES AND BASES OF REASONING

- Grounded on a variety of European surveys and projects (*that, for sure, are partially or entirely well known...*)
- Results of PRALINE project (IT, +Malta, Lithuania and Portugal)

FOCUS OF THE SPEECH

the use of PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY TO ASSESS THE QUALITY OF ADULT EDUCATION PROVISION

Adult Learning and its peculiarities

The analysis and considerations related to the characteristics and peculiarities of both the **Adult Learners** and the **Adult Learning sector**, justified the continuous effort to **redesign and adapt the cognitive framework of the European Peer Review** procedure to Adult Learning.

In Europe there is a large debate focused around the need to strengthen the sector's quality guarantees

(also in consideration of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the actors involved, both as providers and beneficiaries)

Three recommendations...

Recommendations concern three major lines of the expected development of the AL systems

Recommendation nr. 1: Defining a common framework to guarantee the quality of lifelong and lifewide learning;

Recommendation nr. 2: Enhancing the diversification, flexibility and adaptability of quality assurance methodologies used;

Recommendation nr. 3: Supporting the development of a culture of quality in the AL organizations and institutions.

Common key issues to be discussed

Considering these three key areas of improvement and related Recommendations I will try:

- to answer the question **whether and how the application of European Peer Review methodology adapted to AL sector can facilitate the adjustment path** towards the objectives set out in those recommendations.
- **to identify some possible areas of implementation**, both at the provider and policy maker levels, so that the application of this methodology can better express its potential

Recommandation 1: defining a common framework..

“The lifelong learning approach is gradually making the division between the different education and training sectors obsolete.”

(Panteia Report)

“Beyond the differences related to the specific institutional contexts, the target group or the educational objectives that characterize the different training setting – the approaches to quality assurance in VET and AE are substantially similar.”

(Thematic network QALLL)

It could be possible to use also for Adult Education the quality assurance methods already tested for VET, adapting and developing them further.

Three recommendations...

How the European Peer Review methodology adapted to Adult Learning contributes to the fulfilment of this Recommendation?

The adaption to Adult Learning of the cognitive framework and the instruments of the European Peer Review methodology is necessary to take into account some key features of learning in adulthood as well as some peculiarities of the field of Adult Learning

About specific attitudes of adult learners:

- adult learners are most successful when they find the learning meaningful.
- on the basis of their experience, each adult becomes an important contributor to quality

About some specificities of the AL sector:

- large number of providers in terms of organisational structure, size and operational rules
- a wide range of institutions deliver learning to adults with different needs.
- learning contexts: Adult learning has its own culture and traditions reflected in its diversity, varied age profile, range of delivery methods, teaching and learning styles

Major revision needed to adapt PRM to AL

Quality Areas to be subject to major revision:

- "Learning and Teaching", which focuses on the analysis of the quality of the design and management of the learning and teaching process;
- "Information, guidance and registration" which, provides for a specific criterion relating to the validation and recognition of learning previously acquired;
- "Learning outcomes and results", which focuses on description of methods of collecting data and documentation about learning results and outcomes, on quality of learning results achieved by learners and follow-up offered to participants at the conclusion of their learning paths.

The framework must taking into account the four general dimensions of quality:

1. Relevance (provision of an effective route to and support for, personal and social change)
2. Equity (in access and participation),
3. Effectiveness (positive means-end relationships)
4. Efficiency (the ratio of cost to benefits).

How to implement the recommendations by policy makers and VET/AL providers?

1. Systematize the framework of the European Peer Review methodology in a transversal way to the different fields of education and training, in order to have a system valid for IVET, CVET and AL – an overarching framework encompassing educational sectors.
2. Clearly position Peer Review in the larger quality assurance system of adult learning sector in order to ensure further use of Peer Review and its recognition as external evaluation methodology at national and European level.

Recommendation nr. 2. Enhancing the diversification, flexibility ...

Only apparently the Recommendation seems to contradict those relating to the need for a common and integrated framework for quality assurance.

“While a common approach to quality assurance in adult learning is needed, its application should not be prescriptive but rather adapted according to the forms of adult learning and their intended outcomes.”

(Panteia Report)

It is recommended to identify a methodology which is:

- able to balance the use of self-evaluation and external evaluation;
- capable of including approaches to data gathering both qualitative and quantitative;
- as transparent as possible, easy to use and not bureaucratic;
- able to reflect the work processes and the organization's goals

How the European Peer Review methodology adapted to Adult Learning contributes to the fulfilment of this Recommendation?

- The Peer Review methodology is an approach to quality assurance and quality improvement in VET and AL that can be easily integrated with other methods and devices
- It can be used as a variant of the external evaluation, or as preparatory to an evaluation carried out by inspectors;
- Especially for those organizations working in the field of AL that provide not funded training and/or for organizations (such as companies) that do not have education as their priority mission, **Peer Review methodology adapted to AL puts at disposal a framework and a set of criteria and indicators for the evaluation and the continuous improvement of quality more sustainable**

How to implement the recommendations by policy makers and VET/AL providers?

1. Encourage connections between different policies and instruments in order to create synergies and promote greater transparency and consistency between sectors that also operate separately to each other:
2. Consider the possibility of adaptation to the specificities of the organizations and of the educational offer, in order to include everyone in the process of improvement, starting from the sharing of a common framework;
3. Integrate Peer Review methodology with other Quality Assurance methods, proposing this as a starting mechanism in the process of defining and developing a system of "performance-based awarding schemes";
4. Support an approach that is adopted on a voluntary basis through institutional and shared forms of recognition and visibility, as Registers of Peers, the Peer Review European Label, etc.

Recommendation nr. 3. “Supporting the development of a culture...”

“A quality management system (QMS) is a formalized system that documents processes, procedures, and responsibilities for achieving quality policies and objective”.

Emphasis of this approach to quality assurance is necessarily on the strict adherence to certain standards, to specific procedures and on the production of appropriate documentations.

However, the focus on quality assurance and management aspects risks leaving in the shadow the cultural aspects.

At the opposite, building a culture of quality is considered “a crucial precondition for the successful implementation of a quality management system”.

In training organizations in the heart of the approach to quality there is the relationship of exchange between trainers and trainees.

The prevailing idea is the existence of a relationship between the production of quality and the cooperation of all the actors involved.

it is important to understand how to develop within the organizations a culture of quality.

As a leverage to support the development of a culture of quality, it should be mentioned:

- A. Strong commitment by the organization's management.
- B. The involvement of staff at all levels in the process, on the basis of a clear understanding of the objectives and the expected benefits.
- C. Creating inside the organization an open and collaborative climate, which makes possible a constructive assessment and feedback useful for the improvement.
- D. Promoting active participation, giving space to self-determination and self-regulation.
- E. Ensuring that active participation in quality assurance processes become an integral part of the professionalization and the development of staff skills.

How the European Peer Review methodology adapted to Adult Learning contributes to the fulfilment of this Recommendation?

Several characteristics of the European Peer Review methodology are connected to its impact on certain relevant dimensions of a culture of quality:

- a. The application of the PR methodology in its different phases is not possible without a strong commitment of and support by the management of the organization involved.
- b. The PR Methodology requires for its implementation the active involvement of different roles inside and outside the organization and at every level of the organization.
- c. The preparation and realization of a Peer Visit stimulates a process of organizational learning, indispensable for any real change;
- d. The PR encourages and promotes the development of competencies of the staff roles involved, thanks to the exchange and mutual learning, among professionals and different organizations, which is realized in the course of the different phases of its application.
- e. The PR requires for its application and at the same time it encourages the strengthening of some soft skills (leadership, relational efficacy, teamwork, problem solving, communications etc.) that are essential for the development and strengthening of a culture of quality.

How to implement the recommendations by policy makers and VET/AL providers?

1. Support opportunities for interaction and exchange between VET providers and AL providers in order to feed and strengthen a common vision in terms of the quality of learning offer.
2. Develop quality network among providers, valuing and rewarding initiatives of mutual evaluation among organizations also from different sectors.
3. Promote information and training meetings on the issues of the quality of learning offer addressed not necessarily, or not only, to quality specialists, in order to support the use of a language and an approach that make more evident the links between quality assurance criteria, tools and procedures and their meaning and impact in terms of expected benefits for organizations and learners.
4. Promote the professional qualification and continuing training of personnel responsible for education and training, in particular on issues of quality assurance and the consequent recognition of these skills as relevant within their professional profile.

c.vitali@inapp.org

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION



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INAPP - Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche
Corso d'Italia, 33 - 00198 Roma - tel. +39.06.85447.1 - www.inapp.org