



**Continuing Education Quality Management in LLL
Case Study: Project DAETE**

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The case study of quality management in continuing education is based on the project DAETE (daete.up.pt). This was a project funded by the European Commission and by the United States in the Atlantis program. In this project tools were developed and tested that enabled the development of processes of improvement in Lifelong Learning (LLL) management. This project included a self-assessment matrix for Higher Education organizations involved in Continuing Education (CE) and in LLL. The tool was based on the template of EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management). This tool also helped the external evaluation of LLL centers and the comparison of performance with other similar organizations.

There were several self-assessment tests made that involved 42 institutions of LLL and HE in Europe, the USA and China. The method was also used with the results of the partners who have obtained grades of Good or Very Good. The goal was to try to create a repository of examples of quality and of best practices. It was also taken into account the structural differences between organizations so as to group the results of institutions with similar characteristics. The process was adopted by the International Association of Continuing Engineering Education (www.iacee.org) as an instrument for evaluating the quality of management of centres worldwide.

This management model is based on the analysis of indicators of performance in terms of resource utilization and analysis of the results obtained. The proposed system encompasses the various phases of EFQM like planning, implementation, verification and improvement. It appears to be a proposal that is adapted to HE and that allows the use in various contexts.

Description of case study

The DAETE project (Development of Accreditation of Education and Training in Engineering - daete.up.pt) follows the initiative to use the self-assessment matrix of EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management - www.efqm.org) of project ALFA II-0180 funded by the European Commission. This approach was adopted in 2007 by the eight project partners of DAETE and was funded by the Atlantis programme of the European Commission and of the program of the USA, Department of Education, FIPSE. During this project, this tool has been modified to be applicable in the management of CE and LLL centres.

The current set of tools and processes obtained in the project DAETE intended to establish guidelines for management with quality of CE and LLL. It also allows the accreditation of these centres in terms of CE and LLL. The principles of the DAETE method are:

a) Diagnostic tool: the matrix is intended to be used for diagnosis and as a method for continuous improvement and as a tool of transformation of the organization.

b) Level of the people who will use the tool: the matrix will be, if possible, used by the leaders of the institution, of the centre or of the department. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the institution to widen participation in self-assessment to other elements in order to address all perspectives of the self-assessment.

c) Different types of institutions: it is necessary to consider that there is a wide variety of institutions and organizations with different characteristics such as diversity of courses, of dimension, of organization, of financing, etc.

d) Use and applicability: focus on the use of the self-assessment model in all academic areas and in various types of institutions.

EFQM model and structure

The European model of excellence EFQM is a practical tool to help organizations achieve high levels of quality by measuring where they are to improve to achieve excellence. The model is based on nine basic criteria which serve to ensure the excellence of an organization. The criteria include five chapters about processes and four chapters about results. The first five discuss what makes an organization and the other four check the results that an organization achieves.

The model shows that the leadership and strategy are obtained through combinations between people and resources. The criteria of EFQM determine the level of satisfaction of users throughout the organization, the satisfaction of the people who work in the organization and the organization's impact on society. The EFQM model proposes self-assessment as a complete and systematic analysis method. It proposes that these results are compared to the results of similar organizations within the EFQM Excellence model. The quest for excellence should be done by the RADAR technique. This is composed of four elements: (R) results, (A) analysis, (D) deployment (A) and (R) revision.

The fundamental concepts of excellence

The fundamental concepts of excellence of the EFQM model are the principles underlying a sustainable form as an essential basis for any organization. These may be used as the basis for describing the attributes of an excellent organizational culture. The eight fundamental concepts of excellence are:

- Concentration on user
- Guidance for the results
- Leadership and constancy of orientation

- Management by processes and facts
- Involvement and development of people
- Continuous training, innovation and improvement
- Developing partnerships
- Corporate social responsibility

The EFQM model divides the organizational processes in nine criteria, each with sub-criteria. In the evaluation of educational centres obtained in DAETE uses several sub-criteria for each criterion. It was necessary to adapt the sub-criteria procedures to the needs of organizations of CE and LLL. The levels of development for each sub-criteria are based on EFQM's RADAR logic. Consequently, the organization processes of CE and LLL are evaluated, developed and established in most functional areas of each organization. Through regular monitoring of these processes, the effectiveness of each activity is evaluated and the results are used to determine and implement improvements.

The five levels of each sub-criteria

The characteristics of the five levels of each sub-criteria were chosen according to the following rules:

a) level 1: the quality depends exclusively on the individual (there is some process); the activities depend on individual initiatives and are not scheduled globally.

b) level 2: the quality is based on basic processes; responsibility for each activity ceases to be individual and tends to be the sharing of responsibilities by the department, with some short-term planning; there is some degree of process definition, however there is no documentation; performance is evaluated on an occasional basis.

c) level 3: there is vision through processes and some guarantee of quality (intermediate processes); there are established standards, procedures and directives known throughout the organization; activities are carried out in accordance with these procedures; activities are planned with medium-term objectives and evaluation indicators are defined.

d) level 4: there are systematic evaluation and improvement of processes (sophisticated processes); established procedures are systematically evaluated to create possible improvements; there is a guideline clearly visible to the user in the organization; activities are planned with well-defined objectives, the medium and long term.

e) level 5: there is a task to have an excellence recognized externally (processes of excellence); there is exchange of knowledge and experiences throughout the organization, within the framework of the organization and with entities outside the organization (including competitors); the formulation and improvement of the procedures of the organization are in compliance with internal and external; the experiences and best practices are shared with other entities; there are partnerships and exchanges of information with users, with teachers and with other centres, etc.

The path to excellence

The journey to excellence is based on continuous improvement, self-assessment, good management practices and a planning discipline. It is important to consider the following principles:

- Assess where you are now: A way to do this is to organization's self-assessment. The self-assessment process can help your organization understand the current state in terms of quality.

- Define priorities of activities: To align business strategy and organization, you need to understand existing trends and areas of improvement. Fundamental concepts of the excellence can be used to compare the strategies of the organization.

- Identify what you need to improve: self-assessment can help provide a detailed map for people in your organization. It may help to answer: "Where we need to improve?"

- Identify how to improve your organization: use other organizations through comparison (benchmarking). It can help the identification of good practices of other organizations. These comparisons can evaluate processes,

organizations or indicators to develop a benchmarking strategy that will help direct improvement efforts.

The self-assessment method has enormous potential to become a standard in the quality of CE and LLL providers. This method relies on the use of a matrix of self-evaluation using data obtained from facts. The best results of this self-assessment will be better when:

- a) Who fills out the questionnaire in positions of responsibility in the organization (directors or managers of the centre, intermediate technicians, etc.)
- b) there is more than a person who fills out the questionnaire and when the debate generated produces beneficial results for the organization.

PDCA Cycle

The PDCA cycle is designed to learn from the implementation of the results obtained with the self-assessment. This cycle can be illustrated by a diagram like Figure 1. This cycle is named by Deming and means Plan (Plan), Do (Do), Check (Check), Act (Act):

- Planning: The cycle begins with the planning of activities.
- Do: Once it was planned to run to get specific results.
- Check: To complete the cycle to the next phase is to verify if the results match the planned previously.
- Act: If the results aren't what you expected then it is necessary to take corrective action.

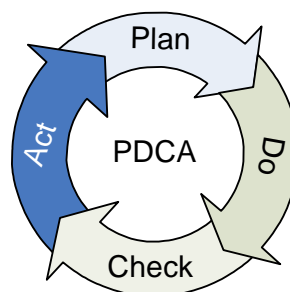


Figure 1. Cycle PDCA

Definition of the nine Criteria

a) Leadership: leaders develop and facilitate the accomplishment of the mission and vision of continuous education center. Organizational values and systems are necessary for sustainable success and to implement these through actions and behaviors. During periods of change, they retain a constancy of purpose but where necessary the leaders are able to change the direction of the organization and to inspire the other members of the organization.

b) Policy and strategy: excellent organizations that implement the mission and vision, developing a strategy focused on the parties concerned and taking into account the external needs and those of the sector in acting. The policies, plans, objectives and processes are developed and deployed to implement the organization's strategy.

c) People: Excellent organizations that manage, develop and release the potential of people in your organization to the individual level, based on teamwork organization. They promote fairness and equality, involve and empower the people in your organization. CE and LLL centres reward and recognize people to motivate them to use skills and knowledge in benefit of the organization.

d) Excellent partnerships and resources: organizations wishing to make a management of external partnerships and internal resources to support the policy and strategy in order to have an efficient operation of processes. When planning the management of resources and partnerships these are made to balance the current and future needs of the organization.

e) Processes: organizations design, manage and improve processes in order to fully meet and generate increasing value for users and other interested parties.

f) Results of user: organizations thoroughly measure learning outcomes in order to have good results.

g) Results of the organization: organizations measure exhaustively the results relating to employees.

h) Results for society: organizations measure exhaustively the results that relate to the society.

i) Performance results: organizations measure exhaustively the results of key policy and strategy adopted.

Conclusions

The model was used with the matrix for self-assessment in CE and LLL centers in forty-two cases. The centers are in several European countries, the USA and China. The characteristics of the centres that used this tool are varied in size, funding, university autonomy, activities, types of courses, organizational structures, etc. However the satisfaction with the method was always positive. There was criticism and suggestions for improvement of the method that were constructive and indication of improvements.

The results of nearly four years of use allowed the assessment of the effectiveness and value of the method. Two significant indicators of the usefulness of the method are the adoption by the International Association of Continuing Engineering Education (www.iacee.org) of the method to a quality assurance program of CE centres and the translation and printing by Tsinghua University, China publishing in English for use in Chinese CE and LLL centres. This acceptance by multiple users leads to thinking that this is an appropriate instrument to continue on the evaluation and improvement of the quality of university centres of CE and LLLL.

The results of these applications have led to other developments that allow a better use of the self-assessment matrix. One of the improvements was the elaboration of a database of cases in which the evaluations resulted in values at level 4 or 5. These cases can be interpreted as good practice and may serve as example to other centers that want to improve. Another useful development was the creation of a data set that identified the types of centres in order to be able to compare results of similar organizations.

One interesting conclusion of this study was to verify that the method has flexibility and breadth that enables its use in quite different situations and in different centres. This feature allows us to conclude that this is a method that can be applied to another type of HE organizations with different activities. It is a question to adapt the sub-criteria in order to be able to characterize the processes and results of that HE sector. This self-assessment can also be complemented by external expert and peer analysis.

References

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