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Evaluation mission by EU consultant to TAKK: An exploration about progress in implementation of the EQF and EQAF in Finnish vocational education (should be in force year 2010)

Actors

Ms. Olympia Egalité (Anja): contracted by the DG Education and Culture, Programme for Lifelong learning
XX (Vesa): Rector of TAKK
Ms. Ritva Kähkönen (Virve): VET teacher educator, moderator of staff development in TAKK
Pekka ja AA (Marko ja Tiina): Finnish and Arabian students in catering programme
Ms. Precious Excellent (Kirsti): Teacher from catering unit

Podium: TAKK
Scene 1. Ms Egalité arrives with a taxi to TAKK. Rector is welcoming her with the VET teacher educator

Rector XX: Welcome to TAKK. I am XX, rector of TAKK, and this is Ritva Kähkönen, our moderator from vocational teacher education.

Ritva K: Nice to meet you.

Ms. E: Nice to meet you. Oh, it is so lovely to visit Finland in autumn. We have such boring weathers in Brussels. It would be great to have a little hiking trip in the North after this evaluation mission. I am sure you know an easy and cheap way to do it, I mean just as a courtesy to a guest. I have heard the Finns are such friendly and generous people. Of course this has nothing to do with the evaluation; I am famous for my objectivity and fairness in my consultation work…

Rector: Yes, of course. HMM, please come in and let’s have a coffee and talk about the evaluation.

Ritva K: (while going in and sitting in rector’s room): By the way our teachers are very professional, we provide them with the latest research, and they are so eager to upgrade their qualifications, and our staff are all aiming at having doctorates. Yes, teachers do also research and they have connections to the university.

Ms. E: Well. In the EQF the focus is on learning outcomes, not on formal education. In fact, we have just started a dissemination project on student competence framework in European HE. It will be an important step towards the most flexible and competitive HE system of the world, where prior and informal learning will be recognised to full extent.

Rector: (taking thick folders to the table): Yes, of course. HMM. Should we move now to the evaluation of TAKK? I understand you want to investigate our quality assurance system and see how well we fulfil the EU regulations and directives. Here I have all the documents of our system: descriptions on quality assurance techniques, on role of different stakeholders, on internal and external evaluation… And of course summaries in English, and we also have a video and CD, and we have received the national quality award for this and…

Ms. E: My secretaries will go through all documentation, which we find interesting and relevant, and of course will be archived for 10 years in the DG’s document cemetery – I mean centre. I am here in order to get a personal impression on TAKK’s quality, to sense the weak signals and to experience the atmosphere; I am a European level expert on evaluation, if you know what I mean.

(Stands up, goes out and knocks on one classroom door) Let me see, what is happening here in this classroom.
Scene 2. In the classroom students have an evaluation discussion about their learning outcome – preparing mushroom soup for institutional catering – with teacher, in Finnish. Ms. E, Rector and Ritva K stand and watch for a while…

(Suom. opisk. ”Pekka” ja arabiopisk.”AA” yrittävät yhdessä saada sienikeiton laadituksi, miettivät mistä sienistä ja miten tehdä ja miksi – powerpointit: punikkitatti, herkkutatti, suppilovahvero, torvisieni, vaalea orakas, lampaan-kääpä…)

**Pekka:** AA, have you got mushrooms there in Israel you come from? Here in Finland we have many delicious species like herkkutatti, suppilovahvero or lampaan-kääpä. Try to repeat after me; herkku-tatti, suppilo-vahvero, …vah-ve-ro, -good- and lampaan-kääpä. …no, kääl-pä, okay…never mind...

**Pekka:** Have you any idea what we have to do first? What species are going to use in this soup? I think that herkkutatti would be good in our purposes and in addition, it sounds tasty. If I try to translate it to you, it is something like, hmm..delicious…tatti. Did you know that some species of mushrooms are toxic? You can make also toxic mushrooms eatable by boiling them several times. Actually I don’t know is the herkkutatti toxic or not. Perhaps we should first boil well the mushrooms we are using, just on the safe side?

**Arabiopiskelija (AA):** (Kommentoisiko vaikka jotain lajivalinnasta ja sienien keittämisestä.)

**Pekka:** Okay, but you got the responsibility if somebody is going to die or fall ill.

**Ms. Precious Excellent:** Oh, Pekka, Pekka! When do you start to listen to the teaching! You cannot just do as your forefathers or as you guess! Not all toxic mushrooms get safe by cooking! You are endangering numerous lives and you put your whole country and your whole culture into danger of accusations for terrorism! To work in restaurant you need to know every tiny detail accurately, not only about species but also about spices!

**Pekka:** How do we start then? I suggest we take a lot of butter and fry up the mushrooms before putting them into the pot with water. After frying we can utilize that tasty frying-butter and add it also into the soup. And when the mushrooms are boiling we can add the potatoes, vegetables, onions and spices like salt and pepper into the soup. Then we just wait that they all are cooked and ready to eat. Yep, like a child’s play – definitely we don’t need any advices of teacher or books of recipes for this!

**Arabiopiskelija (AA):**

Ravintotalousopettaja keskeyttää närkästyneenä ja alkaa motkottaa virheistä ja näyttää, miten tehdään oikein. (Esimerkiksi perunoita ei liene käytetä sienikeitossa, paistorasvaa hyödynnetään kastikkeissa - tuskin keitoissa jne…)

**Ms. Precious Excellent:** Oi, oi, oi! This is not what we are going to do! You know I have the multicultural gastronomic tradition but now we do exactly according to the Finnish instructions and those applied according to the EU directives! First you do not use potatoes in a mushroom soup, no not at all. And those cucumbers we cannot use as they are not adequate according to the directives! You also have to forget using butter – don’t you know that only olive oil is permitted to be used!

**Ritva K:** Excuse me, but I would like to interrupt your intensive working for the moment…this is really an authentic situation to remind about it what we talked last time in our seminar, Ms. Precious Excellent. You remember, we discussed about constructivistic view for learning and how important it is to support self directed learning. Students should have time and space to reflect upon what they want to learn and why…find their own view and meaning for the issue they want to study. They learn to assess themselves their own learning…and isn’t it great if teacher is not needed anymore so intensively? You just teach students to learn, emphasis is not on small details or skills. The whole learning process is so holistic…sorry for interruption, just continue…
Ms. E: interrupts all: Oh my God, what on earth is going on here? Is this your concept of implementing the EQF and EQAF? Please, Mr. XX, can you explain.

Rector: Yes, of course. HMM, what is going on here? Can you explain (points to teachers).

Ritva K: We are so pleased to get you here right now. We just agreed how important it is to teach students to learn. Lifelong learning, you know. We appreciate it that students become more self-directed, they can use all available material, virtual environments...they become really highly skilled workers.

Ms. Precious Excellent: Dear Ms Egalité, my dear Colleagues, you obviously are not exactly specialized in the field of practice. If indeed I let these kids to practice constructivist way of study, they will poison the whole delegation on the next meal and they will definitely break every possible EU-directive. If I let them be self-directive, they will do nothing at all but play with Internet…

Ms. E: But what is this qualification? At which level of EQF is it? How have you determined the learning outcomes? What about the role of working life? And social partners, and quality assurance...?

Rector: The level of EQF is highest possible. We offer education and development services in Pirkanmaa area in Finland and in the city of Tampere surroundings and have altogether 50 employees in our contact network. The number of students attending our courses and programmes is over 10 000 each year and the number of educators and experts from universities and business environment enrolled in our courses and programmes reaches up to 100 annually. We continuously develop our quality assurance system with those partners and evaluate the learning outcomes of our education services throughout our computerized feedback system. All this information you can find from our web pages as well.

Pekka: Hey… Can somebody tell to me, what is the quality or learning outcomes anyway? Do you think that the quality or learning outcomes are better if we make the soup exactly according the teacher’s advices and knowing all technical and contextual concepts than making it in our own if in spite of all we manage to make as delicious soup? I think that the quality and learning outcomes must be seen differently – if you disagree, please have a taste that delicious soup we just made…

Arabiopisk:

Ms. Precious Excellent: Well, now I must admit that you have however listened somewhat more than I thought, you have even learned something – this is not bad at all…

Ritva Kähkönen: This soup is excellent. Please, ms. Egalité, have a taste.

Ms. E: I think I have had enough for and in depth-impression now and I like to discuss with you.

Rector: Yes, but all this information on our quality and feedback system is in these statistics so I can give you these folders and you can read more.

Ritva K: Yes, of course, we’d like to discuss with you more.
Scene 3. Ms. E, Rector and Ritva K walk to rector’s room. Rector is desperate, Ritva K looks surprised, Ms. E is shaking her head. Rector is quickly serving his coffee and lighting her cigarette.

**Ms. E:** I feel like needing some explanation. Mr (Rector), Do you have any respect to the EQF and EQAF. In Brussels we have thought so highly of the Finns as demonstrating us the best practices, how do you explain what I had to experience just now?

**Rector:** (taking the folders on the table) Yes, of course. Ms. Egalité, as I told you, the statistics show that our students are very well employed, the cost-effectiveness of our institute is among the best in Europe, our staff is highly qualified – perhaps you can tell how many doctoral students do we have among the teachers, Ritva?

**Ritva K:** I’m not sure about the figures, but I kow that there are several doctoral students in this unit. They do very good work by keeping contacts to the university...and contacts can lead to continuing collaboration with the researchers. The status of VET is not necessarily so high among researchers in education, but together we try to improve the situation.

**Ms. E:** This definitely is not what we were expecting from the EQF: no signs of systems for transparency, flexibility, individual recognition of informal learning...

**Rector:** Öhöm....but It depends on how you interpret this statistical information… Help me, could you Ritva perhaps tell something about our study counselling system what is mentioned here in these folders, how it is working in practice?

**Ritva K:** We are still in the process to pay attention more on flexilibity etc. But we have quite good results already about the system of personal study plan, the plan which is done in the beginning of the studies.

**Ms. E:** Oh, it has been such a stressful journey. I do hope I had a time to reflect on my experiences, before returning to Brussels... And also my colleagues would be so jealous, if I had an real experience of collecting mushrooms in the wilderness...

**Rector:** Yes, of course. In fact I warmly recommend you the paradise spa, with which our institute is closely co-operating; it is located right inside wonderful forests and...

**Ms. E:** You must understand that such offers don’t have anything to do with my evaluation...

**Ritva K:** Excuse me, but, Ms. E, perhaps you would like to come and visit my cottage by the lake Näsijärvi. In autumn it is a lovely place for calming down, for smelling the forest, for looking at mushrooms. We could warm up the sauna and have some in-depth discussions about issues in vocational education...No men will be there, no worry about it.

**Ms. E:** I must see if I can reschedule my return flight to Brussels. And I think I am really impressed from the way you have implemented the EU policy recommendations here in Finland. It seems I don’t have anything but positive remarks to make from my visit to the directorate. But Ms. YY, I am most interested in learning about the place you are talking about...

Ms. E and Ms. Kähkönen are going away, whispering with each other...

Rector remains in the room looking at his folders in confusion...