

Germany – Quality management at vocational schools

In Hesse, about half of the vocational schools work with a quality management system, which is based on the Q2E model from north western Switzerland. At the level of individual quality development, the main component is the feedback that teachers receive on their teaching from their pupils or colleagues. At the institutional level, internal evaluation is conducted to check the effectiveness of measures that are agreed upon within the school for school and teaching development. In addition, organisational governance plays a major role in implementing appropriate structures and processes for school quality management.

Participation, transparency, and dialogue are essential elements of a continuous improvement process, oriented towards the Plan Do Check Act (PDCA) cycle, at all systemic levels. The aim is to develop a culture of quality in vocational schools that translates quality management into everyday effectiveness and ultimately serves to ensure teaching-learning processes that are conducive to learning for pupils and that support their learning and personal development.

In Hesse, the establishment of a quality management system, according to the Q2E model, is obligatory for all independent vocational schools by decree. For this purpose, schools are given an extended scope for action and budgetary freedom.

Three years after conversion to an independent vocational school - and every five years thereafter - a meta-evaluation is carried out by a Q2E certified team of experts from the Teachers' Academy. The basis of the standard procedure is, on the one hand, prioritised criteria of the Hessian Reference Framework for School Quality and, on the other hand, the guiding principles of the Q2E model.

Through this structured external view of its internal processes and strategies, the school receives criteria-based, data-supported feedback on the current status of its quality management, and, in addition, it stimulates further development. The aims of the meta-evaluation are to strengthen the school actors in their own responsibility and to communicate quality demands to independent vocational schools. The Hessische Lehrkräfteakademie (Hessian Teachers' Academy) also provides process accompanying advisory and support services, e.g., in the context of target agreement processes between the school and the school supervisory authority after the meta-evaluation has taken place, which can be agreed and designed for individual schools.

Personal responsibility and accountability are essential characteristics of quality orientation in vocational education and training in Hesse, as well as self-assessment and assessment by others. The implementation of quality management structures and processes is not an end in itself, but they serve other purposes. Schools that implement the quality management structures have their everyday use in mind.