

Quality Assurance in Public Vocational Education Institutions

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Abstract

This paper examines the attitudes of VET educators with regard to the contemporary legislative framework for evaluation. Following an overview of the concept of quality, with particular reference to its relationship with evaluation and quality assurance, we examine the ways in which these principles are reflected in the recent legislative framework for public Institutes of Vocational Education (SAEK in Greek). Additionally, we present the findings of a qualitative study conducted with the participation of ten SAEK educators. They highlight their diverse perceptions of quality and emphasise the challenges associated with adopting different practices, in the context of resisting to change and being suspicious regarding the processes involved. Overall, quality assurance is perceived as a complex process, with the educators' reservations focusing on the lack of preparation and its implementation in the field.

Keywords

Quality, evaluation, quality assurance, SAEK, educators

1. Introduction

In recent years, a number of legislative initiatives have been introduced by the Greek Ministry of Education with the aim of embedding evaluation within the educational structures under its supervision, including school education, higher education and non-formal education (Vasilopoulos 2023; Prokou, E. et al., 2023). This development gave rise to the adoption of new terminology within the Greek education system, including the concepts of 'quality', 'quality assurance' and 'evaluation'. A series of changes in the processes and functioning of the national education system, as well as in the roles of all stakeholders, including personnel, educators, students and relevant parties, was also precipitated. The present paper aims to investigate the attitudes of educators in public Institutes of Vocational Education¹ (SAEK in Greek) towards the content of this current terminology and the contemporary legislative framework for evaluation. In the context of this discussion, the present paper addresses the prevailing legal framework pertaining to the assurance of quality within the domain of vocational educational and training programmes. It thus adds to a series of studies with relative content that explore critical issues in the field of adult education. Specifically, Fotopoulos and Zagos (2016) examined the European experience regarding quality assurance, emphasising the influence of the Greek legislative framework on European trends in education and vocational training. Goulas et al. (2022) presented the findings of research conducted on the transition of IEK graduates to employment, thereby demonstrating a linkage between vocational education and training with the world of work. The qualitative component

¹ In accordance with Law 5082/2024 (Government Gazette 9/A/19-1-2024), all Vocational Educational Institutes (I.E.K. in Greek) were re-designated as Schools of Higher Vocational Education (S.A.E.K.). The aforementioned change was accompanied by the stipulation in the Decree 85/2022 (Government Gazette 232/A/17.12.2022) that the diplomas issued by these institutions constitute secondary or post-secondary education.

of their research yielded noteworthy findings, some of which are being addressed by the introduction of a novel framework of quality assurance for IEK and a more comprehensive long-term strategy to support it. Finally, it is noteworthy to mention the conclusions of the study by Kokkos et al. (2021) on quality assurance in adult education institutions. The study highlights the challenges associated with the implementation of Law 4763/2020 within the current capacity of the management bodies of the adult education system. It emphasises that the evaluation of institutions and their programmes should be primarily focused on the provision of essential knowledge, skills and guidance to trainees, ensuring their employability in positions that align with their qualifications and needs, as well as the economic demands of the sector. Furthermore, if the objective of the evaluation is to stimulate the enhancement of the institutions' overall functioning, it is imperative to ascertain whether the institutions are employing appropriate knowledge and methodology.

In this paper, the content of the key terms used – *evaluation*, *quality* and *quality assurance* – will first be briefly discussed. The legislative framework relevant to the SAEK is then presented. We proceed to the presentation and discussion of the research outcomes following the delineation of the research methodology.

2. Quality Assurance in the SAEK

2.1 The Concept of Quality...

The concept of quality is often described as 'slippery' (Harvey & Green, 1993), and indeed, as Vroomijens (1991) observes, defining it is a futile endeavour². Darra (2005, p. 8) offers a concise yet comprehensive overview of the contemporary literature on the subject, positing that the concept of quality in education is multifaceted and operates across multiple levels. It is further noted that the term's connotations vary among diverse stakeholder groups, being contingent on their respective political and ethical beliefs concerning the enhancement of quality. Additionally, it is observed that the term is intricately interwoven with perceptions and attitudes concerning the nature of human beings, the optimal forms of communication, and the structuring and institutionalisation of their relationships for the fulfilment of specific purposes.

Fortunately, the international literature recognises certain qualities under which this concept may be approached, and these will be discussed below. Firstly, it is imperative to acknowledge the significance of the concept of quality in relation to the user (teachers, students, interest groups, etc.), the circumstances (structure, level of education, time frame) and the reference points (inputs, processes, outputs, mission, objectives, etc.) (Harvey & Newton, 2007; Harvey & Green, 1993; Darra, 2005; Ioakeimidou, 2018; Stamelos et al., 2022). It is important to note that there is no single, conclusive definition of quality. The perception of quality is subjective and varies among stakeholders. Different perceptions of quality are both inevitable and legitimate. They are, also, subject to change over time and can be redefined by stakeholders. Finally, Harvey and Green (1993) in their emblematic article on quality refer to the five dimensions of the concept: excellence; perfection & consistency; fitness for purpose; value for money; and transformation (Harvey & Green, 1993). In Greek educational legislation, and the European political discourse, however, quality is not explicitly defined and is often identified with evaluation (Darra, 2019; Figueiredo, 2025).

2.2 Quality Assurance...

Quality assurance is defined as the process of collecting policies, systems, and practices within or outside an organisation that are designed to achieve, maintain, and improve quality (Campbell &

² The length of this paper precludes a comprehensive discussion over the content of the particular term.

Rozsnyai, 2002). Actually, given the problematic connotations of the term 'quality', the concept of quality assurance is employed in a broad sense, encompassing a wide range of activities including student information and feedback, state oversight of educational institutions, funding allocation, the enhancement of pedagogical practices, and the development of rankings (Williams, 2011; Williams, 2016). Harvey and Newton (2007) distinguish four main approaches to quality assurance: accreditation, audit, evaluation and especially external evaluation. Relatively, quality assurance can be both an internal and an external process. However, it is true that the reference to this term is identified with forms of external monitoring, evaluation or review of quality rather than with activities that originate and are implemented within the organisation.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the UK, however, links quality assurance to the achievement of standards, involving assessment and accreditation processes that ensure that outcomes meet specific requirements (Dara, 2019; Ioakeimidou, 2018). These processes are set by international and/or national bodies (Dara, 2019; Zarifis et al., 2017). The process of quality assurance fosters transparency, thereby engendering stakeholders' trust and ensuring that service delivery meets expectations or minimum predefined requirements (Stamelos et al., 2022).

The importance of quality assurance in education for the success of educational organisations is a key objective of every country's education policy³ (Fotopoulos & Zagos, 2016).

2.3 ... and Evaluation

Evaluation is defined as a systematic process of data collection using specific criteria (Ioakeimidou, 2018). It aims to investigate quality by highlighting, *inter alia*, directions for improvement, interventions, and modifications. It is considered essential for the completion of any programme or activity that produces results (Athanasoula-Reppa, et al., 1999, p. 14). The absence of evaluation in quality assurance is unthinkable (Ioakeimidou, 2018). The evaluation process is integral to the educational project, as it enables the collection of pertinent data to inform final decisions and establish a basis for comparison. (Ioakeimidou, 2018; Karalis & Lintzeris, 2022; Stamelos et al., 2022).

Evaluation may be categorised into different types, including initial or diagnostic evaluation, which is conducted prior to the initiation of a programme, and formative evaluation, which aims to enhance the organisation's internal functions (Ioakeimidou, 2018; Karalis, 2005; Karalis & Papageorgiou, 2012; Stamelos et al., 2022). Summative evaluation is conducted after the completion of a project. Furthermore, evaluation may be categorised as either internal or external. The former occurs when the evaluator is a member of the organisation being evaluated, while the latter occurs when the evaluator belongs to an external body (Ioakeimidou, 2018; Karalis, 2005; Karalis & Papageorgiou, 2012; Stamelos et al., 2022).

The evaluation of educational work is related to the assessment of pedagogical objectives and the quality of the educational process, and comprises three levels: the educational activity, the organised activity, and the outcome of the educational act, considering socio-economic, political, historical and technological factors (Ioakeimidou, 2018). The evaluation of educators and students, on the other hand, is a critical part of the education system. The main risks of educator's evaluation include the (non-)comprehensive investigation of the factors affecting

³ It is interesting, at this point, to make a brief reference to the concept of quality improvement. The contemporary definitions of the terms 'quality assurance' and 'quality improvement' predominantly suggest that they represent distinctly separate activities. However, there have been remarkably few studies that have directly explored the relationship between them. Quality improvement has been defined as 'a process of increase or improvement' (J. Williams, 2016, p. 98). The term is most often used to refer to a process that brings an activity to the level of a desired standard, although it can also imply the intensification or magnification of an effort towards a goal. Research, at least in the UK, has shown that despite the huge growth of quality assurance processes, there remained serious doubts about their effectiveness in achieving continuous quality improvement (J. Williams, 2016).

the educational process, the absence of feedback for educators and the overestimation of final evaluation over formative evaluation.

3. Quality Assurance, Quality and Evaluation in the SAEK: The Legislative Framework

Recent amendments to the legislative framework governing the operation of the SAEK have been implemented, with the aim of aligning with European guidelines for their quality and sustainability (<http://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/el>, accessed on 10.01.2024).

Law 4763/2020 and the new Regulation on the operation of the SAEK (Decision, K5/160259) have established novel principles for the evaluation of educators, headmasters and the institutions themselves, while establishing clear rules for the recruitment and evaluation of staff. The adoption of these regulations has brought about significant changes in the role and responsibilities of educators in SAEK.

Specifically, Article 27 of the new SAEK *Rules of Operation* stipulates that educators are responsible for the posting of educational material, training and evaluation of trainees, and the supervision of their practical training. They are also tasked with completing official documents, participating in study visits, and undergoing an evaluation every six months. Furthermore, the SAEK's new operating rules delineate specific principles, procedures and quality criteria (Article 22) and utilise measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators (Article 23) to assess the implementation of quality principles by the bodies involved. The overarching objective of the framework being developed is to enhance quality by building on existing and new principles in the three components of VET (Table 1).

Table 1: The criteria and indicators of the quality framework

A/N	CRITERIA	INDICATORS
1	Leadership - Organisation - Planning	Level of satisfaction of the educators from the SAEK management
2	Provision of VET services	Level of trainees' satisfaction with the educators
3	Infrastructure - Equipment - Resources	Adequacy of laboratory and technological equipment
4	Innovation - extroversion	Use of new information technologies (ICT)
5	Results - outputs	Participation rate and pass rate of SAEK graduates in the EOPPEP certification exams
6	Labour market relevance	Work rehabilitation

In addition, the proposed framework is based on a continuous improvement process (Article 24) within an implementation cycle of two years. The defined stages of this process are illustrated below (Figure 1):

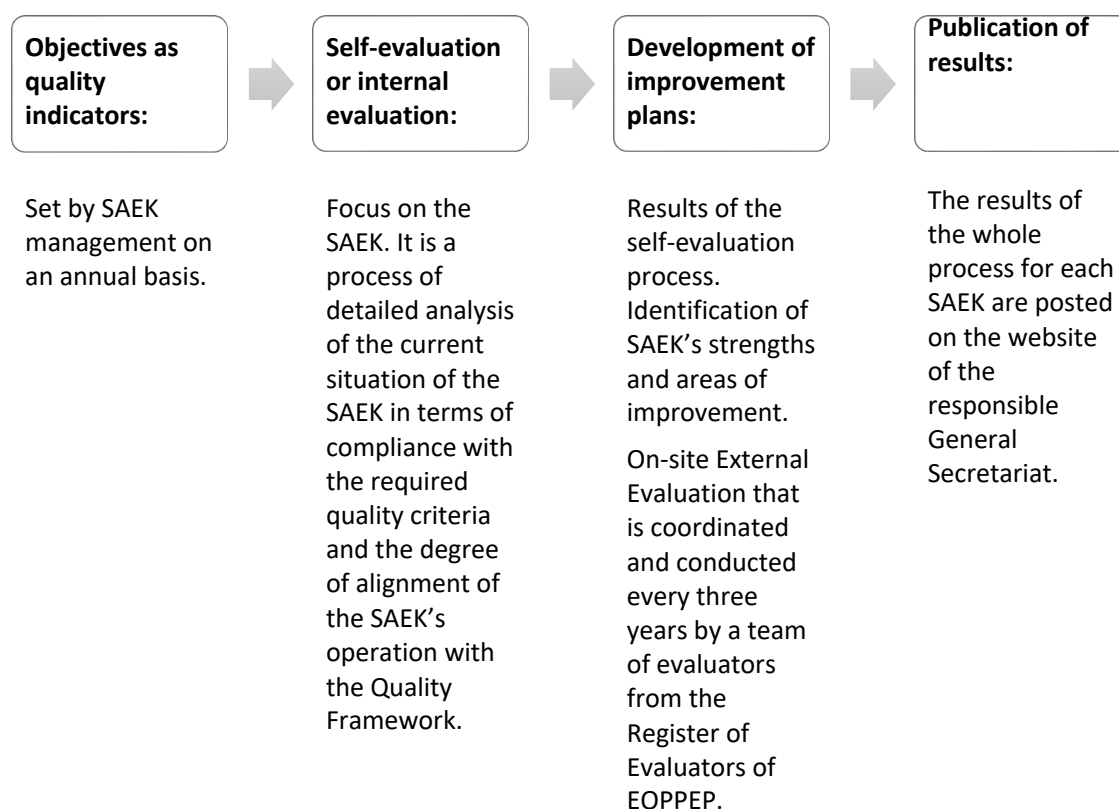


Figure 1: Continuous improvement process (stages)

In summary, the recently introduced evaluation framework for SAEK, as part of a policy discourse, is intended to promote continuous improvement at various levels (processes, results). However, the processes outlined in the new Regulation, which focuses on quality indicators, operational planning and the development of improvement plans (Article 24), present significant challenges for the management and teaching staff of the SAEK during implementation. Rather, the quality monitoring process may become a burdensome task that is dependent on employees' attempts to meet accountability requirements through bureaucratic practices (Williams, 2016). The central issues in this regard remain the implementation of the quality framework in the field and the ability to reproduce the continuous improvement process on a biennial basis (Kokkos et al., 2021).

4. Research Methodology

The present study focuses on the investigation of the attitudes⁴ of educators towards the new quality assurance framework established by Law 4763/2020 and the new Regulation on the operation of the SAEK (Decision, K5/160259). The research was carried out by conducting semi-structured interviews with SAEK educators. Specifically, the following research questions have been posited:

⁴ The term 'attitude' is borrowed from the field of Social Psychology, and attitudes are approached as a 'set of beliefs held in relation to some object of attitude, which may be a person, thing, event or issue' (Crisp & Turner, 2023, p. 423). In this particular instance, the investigation of attitudes in relation to the present research effort is of interest, as they provide direction towards the search for the cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions from which they are constituted. In other words, they allow for a more informed approach to the issue under investigation. At the level of the research tool, therefore, an attempt has been made to delve into all three of these dimensions, which ultimately shape the attitudes of educators towards the recent legislative framework for quality assurance. However, it must be acknowledged that the limitations of this project in the context of a qualitative approach, particularly with regard to the emotional dimension, must be recognised.

- (a) What is the perception of quality and quality assurance among educators in public VET?
(b) What is their attitude towards the current legislative framework on quality assurance in education?

The sample was determined by purposive sampling, selecting educators with similar characteristics from the SAEK institutions of Epirus, until theoretical saturation was reached (Babbie, 2018; Bryman, 2016; Isari & Pourkos, 2015). The demographic profile of the educators interviewed revealed a diverse group of practitioners with a fairly rich educational and professional background.

Table 2: Sample Profile

Instructor Profile							
A/N	Age	Gender	Area of Expertise	Education	Experience		Certified
					Professional	Teaching	Adult Ed.
1	52	Male	Mechanical Engineer	EQF Level 6	-	25	NO
				EQF Level 7			
2	64	Male	Mechanical Engineer	EQF Level 6	11	26	YES
				EQF Level 7			
3	35	Female	Nutritionist	EQF Level 6	6	5	NO
				EQF Level 7			
4	44	Male	Mechanical Engineer	EQF Level 7	10	4	YES
5	44	Female	Decorator	EQF Level 6	18	6	NO
6	41	Male	Economist	EQF Level 7	6	10	YES
7	41	Female	Civil Engineer	EQF Level 7	18	2	NO
8	41	Female	Teacher	EQF Level 7	17		NO
9	43	Female	Kindergarten teacher	EQF Level 6	5	1	NO
10	44	Male	Computer Science	EQF Level 7	7		YES

A total of 10 semi-structured interviews, each with an average duration of approximately 40 minutes, were undertaken during the spring of 2024⁵. Semi-structured interviews were

⁵This research initiative, characterised as a pilot project, is part of a comprehensive programme to implement small research projects within both formal and non-formal educational settings. The fundamental objective of these projects is not to generalise results, but rather to explore relationships within the field and formulate targeted research questions and hypotheses regarding the framework of quality assurance and evaluation in the Greek educational context. In this sense, it is imperative to approach the issue of generalising the results of this research with particular attention. This finding is consistent with the decision to adopt a qualitative approach (Tsiolis, 2014). Nevertheless, this may be regarded as a limitation of the present research endeavour.

favoured due to their capacity to furnish comprehensive descriptions, unveiling details that are not immediately perceptible (Babbie, 2018; Bryman, 2017; Isari & Pourkos, 2015). The transcription of each interview was conducted immediately upon its completion, and a reflective diary was maintained throughout the research process (Bryman, 2016; Isari & Pourkos, 2015; Pyrgiotakis & Simeou, 2016). This methodological approach yielded a more comprehensive understanding of the research, facilitating the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the results. The transcription of the interviews was complemented by careful analysis and coding of the data, while NVivo14 software was used to organise and classify the information. Thematic analysis was identified as the optimal approach for the data analysis (Tsiolis, 2018), with the researchers adopting a flexible stance towards the data to facilitate an in-depth comprehension of its intricate and multidimensional characteristics.

In addressing the validity and reliability of the present research endeavour, Filstead (1970) posits that the emphasis is placed on the degree of consistency between the observations made with the tools utilised. In this regard, the researchers sought confirmation of the findings by the participants themselves, employing a technique known as participant validation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In accordance with the participant validation protocol, the researchers transcribed the interviews and sent them to the participants with the objective of verifying the validity of the interviews. The researchers encouraged the participants to study the descriptions, narratives and interpretations in order to confirm the validity of the researchers' specific research descriptions and interpretations. Finally, the research team sought a detailed presentation of the findings in order to understand the participants' experiences, i.e. transferability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In pursuit of both validity and verifiability, the researchers incorporated the participants' views into the presentation and discussion of the findings, ensuring that their contributions to the research were thoroughly documented (Lincoln, 2001).

Finally, during the research process, particular attention was paid to ethical issues and to ensuring the reliability of the data.

5. Presentation of Results

5.1 Quality and Quality Assurance in the SAEK

The preliminary phase of the research project aimed to ascertain educators' attitudes within public VET institutions with regard to the notions of quality assurance and to establish the educators' involvement in this process. In this regard, the participants were requested to offer their insights on the prevailing state of affairs in the SAEK with regard to quality⁶, along with the challenges and impediments they encounter in their endeavours to deliver quality education.

First, the interviews revealed that the quality of education is perceived mainly through inputs to the educational process such as '*qualified educators*' (P9), infrastructure and curricula. '*Laboratory equipment plays a major role*' (P2) as well as '*updated curricula*' (P2). Quality teaching, which '*attracts learners*' (P1), effective leadership, assessment and monitoring of standards, and a strong value system additionally enhance the quality of the educational process according to interviewees. Finally, the '*comprehensive and multifaceted development of trainees*' (P6) that '*takes into account their needs and potential*' (P7) indicates the success of the education system in providing knowledge and skills that make them more creative and effective.

⁶ In this particular context, the concept 'qualitative' can be understood as an extension of the respondents' original definition. Furthermore, the educators' conceptualisation of quality education was identified as a key focus of the investigation.

The role of the educator in quality education is highlighted as '*the most important*' (P2) by the interviewees and '*crucial in the learning process*' (P8). The educator should be able to improve his/her teaching with '*new methods*' (P8) and use '*supervisory means and tools*' (P10). '*Pedagogical training*' (P1) and the ability to '*encourage critical thinking*' (P8) are also identified as essential. Professional experience and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter are part of the definition of quality education, as the teacher must have the knowledge background in the subject matter of his/her teaching in order to be able to effectively transfer his/her knowledge to the learners. Moreover, it was highlighted by the interviewees that educators, in the modern context, take on many roles: They act as guides and facilitators, considering the different '*perceptions and beliefs of learners*' (P2). They prepare the material in order to transmit knowledge effectively and are '*a role model*' (P8). They function as an intermediary between groups by establishing a conducive learning environment, and subsequently, they guarantee adherence to regulations, assess progress, address issues, foster independent thinking, encourage active engagement, and cultivate respect among students.

The above responses highlighted, both indirectly and directly, the role of educators in quality assurance in SAEK. They, according to the interviews, '*have a great deal of responsibility*' (P6) on this basis. A key element of their professional remit encompasses the preparation and evaluation of teaching materials, in addition to the provision of feedback. They are actively involved in improving the quality of knowledge and their views must be considered by the management '*because they are part of the process*' (P2). Finally, they must '*act in accordance with the rules*' (P4) laid down by the SAEK, ensuring the organisation and efficiency of the institution.

The participants identified factors that they deemed to be important for the purpose of quality assurance:

1. Professional development is desirable, while increased qualifications combined with the required '*professional experience and knowledge*' (P8) are the most important factors in ensuring quality in adult education.
2. The '*teaching methods and the variety of methods and media*' (P3) and the '*application of new technologies*' (P8) used in the educational process help learners to master skills and competences adapted to their own needs.
3. Ongoing evaluation of trainers and learning and '*continuous monitoring of learners' progress*' (P6) is also important. Collaboration with the community and continuous feedback contributes to improving educational practices.
4. Effective leadership, the right '*distribution of tasks*' (P4) and the means used for this purpose contribute to quality assurance.

The study then looked at educators' attitudes to the implementation of legislation in this area, which turned out to be mixed. It was revealed that there is a lack of awareness regarding the significance of adhering to legal statutes and the Study Guide. Conversely, it was noted that instructors should be granted the autonomy to innovate and adapt the training process to align with the needs of the trainees. The majority of participants posit that the optimal approach is a balance between compliance and the active involvement of the educator in improving the training process, with the learners' welfare always being prioritised.

In relation to the quality⁷ of education provided in SAEK, the responses obtained from the study corroborate the findings of the relevant research. The results indicate that this is a product of personal experience, and consequently, the attitudes of educators vary. A plethora of respondents have expressed reservations regarding the proposed initiative, citing a paucity

⁷ See also footnote 6.

of resources, inadequate infrastructure and evaluation mechanisms, and substandard preparation and management as their primary concerns. Furthermore, concerns have been raised regarding the level of preparation of students and their interest in education. It is acknowledged by some that educator training at the highest levels is of great importance, as is the endeavour to enhance the educational process.

In their endeavours to deliver an effective educational experience, educators at SAEK confront numerous challenges and impediments. Notwithstanding the efforts made, a considerable degree of resistance to change was revealed by the interviews. Indeed, the prevailing mindset of many participants was revealed to be antagonistic towards the concept of change. The paucity of time and the excess of workload have been identified as exacerbating factors, while inadequate professional development has been shown to exhaust trainers. The utilisation of obsolete training materials has been identified as a significant impediment to the ability of individuals to 'adapt to the new demands of the labour market' (P7). The dearth of infrastructure and resources, coupled with the excessive utilisation of new technologies, has been identified by numerous observers as a significant hindrance to their work. Nevertheless, there is a degree of optimism that the evaluation and training process will engender improvement, with a number of individuals expressing a firm conviction in the necessity for changes to be made to the educational process.

5.2 The Current Legislative Framework for Quality Assurance in the SAEK

In the second part of the research, the attitudes of educators towards the current legislative framework regarding quality assurance in education were investigated. The educators interpret the recent legislative framework as a substantial change of the SAEK, and they cite numerous pivotal aspects of the novel legislation, with a particular emphasis on evaluation and the influence of personal relationships with evaluators. Revisions and improvements are also considered important for improving the educational process, and the definition of responsibilities and partnerships with other bodies has been shown to enhance transparency and link education to the labour market. The certification of educators has been demonstrated to enhance quality and prepare trainees for their future careers, as evidenced by the findings of the interviews. It is the contention of the interviewees that the aforementioned changes will enable them to modernise their training processes and adapt to the new demands of the educational landscape.

The participants expressed a positive outlook on the potential redefinition of programmes and the utilisation of apprenticeships, anticipating notable outcomes. However, concerns have been raised regarding the absence of adequate infrastructure and the perceived inadequacy of student preparation. The necessity for a collaborative endeavour among all relevant stakeholders, as emphasised by one interviewee, and the training and preparation of educators, are identified as pivotal factors for the effective implementation of these changes. The existence of these conflicting attitudes gives rise to the necessity of continuous adaptation and cooperation in order to enhance VET.

Educators, characteristically, cite '*resistance to change and lack of information*' (P7), both by themselves and by trainees, as a critical difficulty in implementing the new legislative framework. The need for '*adequate logistical infrastructure and financial resources*' (P4) and for '*training of trainers*' (P8) is highlighted. Evaluation of the new procedures and '*personal support for new trainers*' (P2) are also important. Finally, the majority of interviews indicate that the allocation of funding and the enhancement of infrastructure, in conjunction with the selection of qualified and dedicated educators, are deemed to be imperative for the effective implementation of the novel framework. The establishment of a Register of Adult Educators is identified as a significant enhancement within the recently implemented legal framework for the SAEK. This development is recognised as a crucial advancement, as it fosters an

environment of meritocracy: *'A huge improvement has been created'* (P10). *'The change of the Guide and its freer application'* (P6) is also considered positive. In addition, the need for *'upgrading infrastructure'* (P8), *'creating new specialisations'* (P6) and *'strengthening evaluation'* (P7) were noted. *'Training of educators is important'* (P5), as is the provision of *'better quality learning'* (P7). Finally, standardisation of procedures contributes to improvement: *'ISO 9001 or having standardised procedures helps'* (P2).

In conclusion, the educators indicated their concerns regarding the novel legislative framework for SAEK during the study. They proposed that its quality and effectiveness was amenable to refinements. They mentioned the most prominent ones such as the need for better infrastructure and equipment: *'SAEK should have laboratories or cooperation with other institutions for proper functioning'* (P6) and *'revision of specialties according to modern requirements'* (P10). They also stressed the importance of continuous training: *'There should be training in pedagogy, vocational training and new technologies'* (P5). They also suggested more permanent recruitment and better pay: *'There should be a more permanent status of the position of educators'* (P5). Finally, they propose *real (!)* evaluation: *'There should be a real and multidimensional evaluation'* (P1) and incentives should be given: *'Incentives should be given to develop the training process'* (P8).

6. Concluding Remarks

The objective of this research was twofold: firstly, to examine how educators in public SAEK conceptualise the notions of quality and its assurance, and secondly, to explore their role in this process. Additionally, the study sought to ascertain the participants' attitudes towards the contemporary legislative framework for quality assurance and, ultimately, evaluation. A notable finding was that educators in the SAEK approached quality in terms of inputs and processes. They argue that in order to ensure the quality of education in the SAEK, it is necessary to adapt and strengthen the infrastructure and create new and modern specialisations that will ensure the direct employment of SAEK students, as well as to provide resources and develop flexible mechanisms for the provision of quality education. Furthermore, they emphasise the number of different roles to fulfil in the educational process. In this regard, it is asserted that their active participation is required in order to ensure quality improvement and decision-making processes. In addition, it is asserted that professional development is important, as is effective communication with the wider community. Ultimately, it is suggested that continuous evaluation is necessary in order to obtain feedback. Conversely, the legislative framework prioritises the outputs and outcomes of the educational process at all levels (see also Figure 1), aligning with a more fitness-for-purpose conception of quality. Secondly, there is a discrepancy between the expressed attitudes of educators towards quality and their general responses regarding its practical application in the educational process. This finding aligns with the persistent absence of a quality culture in the national education sector, a phenomenon previously highlighted by Stamelos et al. (2012), thereby underscoring the challenges associated with implementing an evaluation process within the SAEK. Equally, the interviewees acknowledged numerous positive aspects of the recently introduced legislative framework for quality assurance in the SAEK. The Register of Adult Educators, the modifications to the Guide to Studies and the standardisation of evaluation procedures are among the positive initiatives that the new legislative framework incorporates. Nevertheless, it appears that resistance to change and a degree of suspicion regarding the procedures are the key obstacles to the successful implementation of the new framework.

Evidently, a concerted effort is required on the part of all stakeholders to cultivate a culture of quality within the Greek context, thereby facilitating the establishment of robust quality assessment and assurance procedures.

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