Beyond Compliance: Internal Roles for Evidence-Informed Peer Review and Organisational Learning in Vocational Education and Training

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Using evidence for improvement: the organisational challenge

Education and training providers are expected to use data, evidence and feedback for accountability, improvement and professional learning.

Available data and feedback → **Collective interpretation** → **Sustainable decisions**

Data and evidence become useful when organisations can interpret it, discuss it collectively and act on it.

What Peer Review means in this study

A formative external evaluation in which professionals with relevant expertise examine a VET provider and offer feedback for improvement.

Self-evaluation and evidence → **Peer visit and professional dialogue** → **Feedback and improvement**

The provider prepares and hosts the process, interprets the feedback and takes responsibility for subsequent action.

Why a focus on Vocational Education and Training?

Interdependent processes

Curriculum, work-based learning, guidance, inclusion and assessment jointly shape the learner's pathway.

Multiple organisational boundaries

Providers coordinate with enterprises, territorial partners and employment services.

Evidence is distributed across processes, actors and settings

VET provides a particularly useful context for examining how evidence and responsibilities are coordinated, with potential relevance to schools and other educational settings.

The theoretical framework

Quality assurance in VET	EQAVET connects planning, implementation, evaluation and review (Deming, 1986; Gutknecht-Gmeiner, 2006).
Organisational learning	Learning as a process through which experience becomes shared knowledge, leading organisations to established routines, assumptions and decision criteria (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Senge, 1990).
Collaborative evaluation	Stakeholder participation, professional dialogue, shared interpretation of evidence and collective reflection (Cousins & Earl, 1992; O'Sullivan, 2012; Preskill & Torres, 1999).

Research question

Which internal functions must be activated for Peer Review to support organisational learning and evidence-informed improvement in VET centres?

Research gap

Procedures describe phases and documents more explicitly than the internal roles that connect evidence, dialogue and improvement.

Data and evidence used

Institutional and policy documents	Formal phases, expected outputs and requirements for evidence.
Scientific literature	Quality assurance, organisational learning, collaborative evaluation and evidence use.
Semi-structured interviews, 2025	Purposively selected informants with experience in VET quality, Peer Review and organisational processes.
Final discussion with experts, 2025	Cross-check of consistency, clarity, non-redundancy and usability.

Methodology: connecting activities, roles and evidence

Task analysis
Activities and decisions

Job analysis
Functions and roles

Behaviour analysis

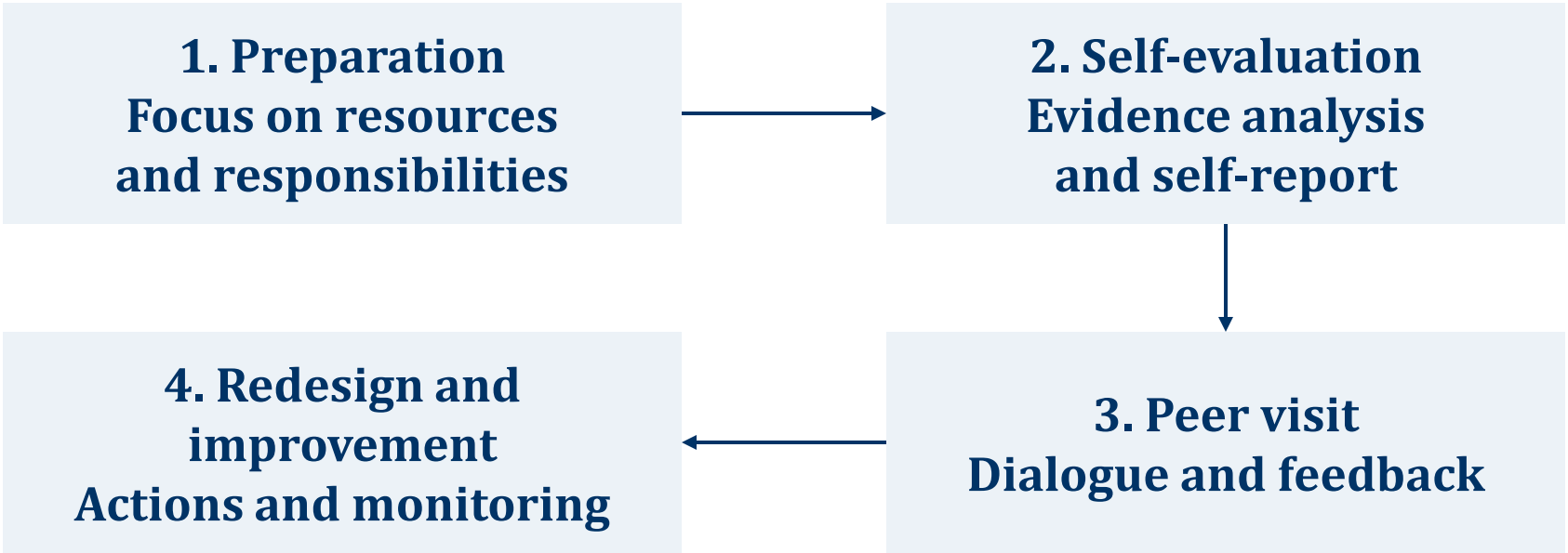
Practices that enable or obstruct participation, evidence use and feedback.

Critical incident technique

Situations in which coordination, dialogue or feedback support or obstruct improvement.

Documents allowed to reconstruct the process. Literature provided analytical categories. Interviews refined operational plausibility. Experts cross-checked the framework.

Result 1: four phases of Peer Review from the host provider's perspective



The process continues beyond the feedback report through the implementation and monitoring of improvement actions.

Result 2: six internal roles and groups of actors

Director	Strategic legitimacy, priorities and resources
Quality manager	Methodological coherence and continuity
Facilitator	Participation, trust and professional dialogue
Research expert	Evidence collection, interpretation and reliability
Improvement designer	Feasible actions, responsibilities and follow-up
Specific internal actors	Situated knowledge and implementation

Roles may be combined or shared.
External stakeholders contribute according to the evaluation focus.

Organisational learning depends on interaction among roles

Director + quality manager	→	Strategic direction and process coherence
Research expert + internal actors	→	Reliable evidence and knowledge of practice
Facilitator + quality manager	→	Open and focused professional dialogue
Improvement designer + director	→	Feasible actions, ownership and resources

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Data literacy and data use as organisational capacities

Data and other evidence → **Professional interpretation** → **Decisions and follow-up**

Roles connect the stages and sustain their continuity. The proposed roles help identify how these connections can be supported.

Beyond individual analytical skills

Evidence use also depends on shared responsibilities, professional cultures and organisational routines.

A situated process

Resources, power relations and opportunities for dialogue influence how evidence informs decisions.

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The evaluator as an architect of dialogic contexts

Methodological rigour

Relevant evidence
Reliable interpretation
Traceable decisions

Conditions for professional dialogue

Participation and trust
Discussion of feedback
Negotiation of meaning

Evaluation as a social process informed by evidence

The proposed perspective combines analytical responsibility with the capacity to facilitate learning and practical action.

Continuity of quality and a possible new peer review

The four-phase peer review process

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Implementation, monitoring and organisational learning within the provider's regular quality cycle

A subsequent quality cycle

The essential point is continuity

Possible new peer review
Revisit progress or select a new focus

Implications for practice, policy and research

Practice	Prepare Peer Review, distribute responsibilities and avoid gaps between evaluation and improvement planning.
Policy	Support providers in developing the organisational capacities required to use evidence, alongside indicators and procedures.
Research	Examine how roles, professional cultures and evidence use interact across different educational and training settings.

Contribution

The framework makes internal functions visible and links evidence use with distributed responsibilities.

Transferability

Schools may use the functional distinctions, adapting them to governance, resources and existing quality systems.

Discussion

A qualitative and practice-oriented model, refined through interviews and expert discussion.

Limits

The study does not estimate effects on learner outcomes. Transferability and implementation require further empirical study.

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