

## Glossary of terms

### **Accreditation**

Grants formal recognition for observing quality standards.

### **Action research**

“A form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social educational practices” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988: 5).

### **Appraisal**

Assesses the performance of staff against an agreed set of criteria. Appraisals are conducted for accountability and developmental purposes.

### **Assessment**

Gathers, quantifies and uses information to measure the degree of achievement of individuals and/or institutions. Assessment is an aspect of evaluation.

- **Achievement assessment:** measures the degree of achievement of learners in relation to objectives set by a particular course and its curriculum.
- **Proficiency assessment:** measures the achievements of learners against common reference levels and competences.

### **Benchmarking**

Obtains and analyses information on aspects of performance in which another organisation excels with the aim of enhancing one’s own performance. Typology includes internal, functional, competitive and generic benchmarking.

### **Capacity building**

A process of tapping and utilising all available resources (especially human resources) to ensure full commitment to and engagement with the organisation’s mission.

### **Charter**

A set of principles and promises a quality association undertakes to observe in order to meet its clients’ needs. In the case of EAQUALS there are Student, Staff and Information charters.

### **Clients**

Learners, parents and sponsors are defined as external clients, whereas staff members of a school are referred to as internal clients. “Direct” clients are those who pay for the services provided. “Indirect” clients are those who influence or who are influenced by what an organisation does – for example, employers in relation to school education.

### **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)**

A comprehensive description of learning, teaching and assessing languages, produced by the Council of Europe. It includes a set of six common reference proficiency levels of language acquisition defined in terms of “can do” statements and learner competences. The underlying theory is the communicative, task-based approach in its linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects.

### **Criteria**

Yardsticks by which the realisation of predetermined objectives can be examined. Statements which reflect quality targets, for example whether a teaching or learning process is effective, efficient, communicative, learner-centred, etc.

### **Curriculum**

An educational programme which sets course objectives, selects and grades course contents (syllabus design), defines its methodology and, based on these, assesses and evaluates performance of learners and institutions. The planning, implementation and evaluation stages of curriculum design are equally important.

### **Effectiveness**

A high degree of achievement of educational goals and requirements.

### **Efficiency**

The process by which one can achieve positive results at a lower cost, without wasted resources, time or money.

### **Evaluation**

A process of collecting and critically analysing data with the purpose of improved decision making, enhanced performance and continuous development of educational institutions.

- **External evaluation:** information/evidence is collected by outside experts who present a thorough analysis (an evaluation report) of institutional performance and make recommendations.
- **Internal evaluation:** a systematic gathering and analysis of information by the institution and its own experts with the aim of improved decision making and quality enhancement.

**Indicators**

Facts and quantifiable data which can be measured and which will provide evidence about whether certain quality standards have been achieved.

**Institutional self-evaluation**

Participatory evaluation initiated in the institution (school, language centre, programme) by the school/centre personnel or project team to facilitate periodic or continuous improvement of the teaching operation/language services/the overall activity (adapted from Mackay et al., 1998).

**Leadership**

It is regarded as a function rather than a role. It recognises the diverse needs of an institution and enables it to develop, to viably respond to opportunities and challenges and to build capacity effectively. Leadership includes moral, strategic, managerial, collaborative and interpersonal aspects.

**Mission**

The purpose of existence of an institution. It is best expressed in a statement of not more than 50 words.

**Observation**

A system for investigating classroom performance of teachers and learners with the aim of improving and sustaining standards. Observations are conducted for training, assessment, personal development and quality assurance purposes. Depending on the purpose, observations are typically done by teacher trainers, teachers or inspectors.

**Quality**

Quality in educational contexts is a multilevel concept and some of the relevant definitions include the treatment of quality as excellence, as enhancement and development, as fitness for purpose and, most importantly, as transformation and ultimately client satisfaction (empowering students with specific skills, knowledge and values).

**Quality assurance**

A regulatory mechanism which establishes, monitors, controls, assesses, maintains and improves quality processes within an institution on an ongoing basis.

**Quality control**

A set of established procedures carried out by external experts to validate quality performance of an educational institution. Rigorous inspection schemes (containing quality criteria and indicators) constitute the heart of the inspection procedure. At a more advanced stage, quality control can be replaced by combined self-evaluation and inspection schemes.

**Quality culture**

A set of behavioural patterns manifested in an educational institution based on a shared vision, mission and quality principles. A self-critical, improving culture which allows all individuals to be involved and contribute to the sustainable professional growth of the organisation.

**Quality models**

Represent different aspects of quality management and include the client satisfaction model, the process model of quality, the outcomes model of quality, the value-driven model of quality and the developmental model of quality.

**Standards**

Represent the operational objectives of a quality process and, often, the ways in which performance will be assessed.