Characteristics and Quality Indicators of Vocational Training Performance: a Systematic Review

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Abstract— **Vocational training plays a crucial role in economic and social development by preparing individuals for the changing demands of the job market. This article reviews the literature on quality characteristics and performance indicators in this field. The main characteristics identified are relevance of pedagogical content, competence of trainers, integration of educational technologies, accessibility and equity, and flexibility of programs. Quality indicators examined include professional integration rates, learner satisfaction, the quality of jobs obtained, certification success rates and learner commitment. The study also analyzes the role of international standards such as ISO 9001, ISO 21001 and the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) excellence model in quality assurance, highlighting their advantages and limitations. Challenges to quality improvement are discussed, including adaptability to changes in the labor market, limited resources, stakeholder commitment and the integration of new technologies. Prospects for overcoming these obstacles are proposed, highlighting the importance of strategic planning, ongoing commitment and the development of partnerships to share resources and best practices.**

Keywords— ***Vocational training, Training quality, Performance indicators, Quality assurance, Quality standards.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocational training is an essential pillar of economic and social development, playing a key role in preparing individuals for the ever-changing demands of the job market. In a world marked by globalization, digital transformation and technological innovation, the skills required by employers are evolving rapidly, making the quality of vocational training more crucial than ever. The characteristics and quality indicators of the performance of this training are therefore at the heart of the concerns of researchers, practitioners and policy-makers.

The quality characteristics of vocational training encompass several key dimensions. The relevance of educational content is fundamental, ensuring that programs reflect current and future labor market needs. The effectiveness of teaching methods is also critical, incorporating innovative pedagogical approaches that promote active learning and learner engagement. The qualifications and expertise of trainers play a major role in imparting knowledge and skills, as do the accessibility and equity of programs, ensuring that diverse groups of learners can benefit from training.

The integration of educational technologies is another important feature, with the growing use of e-learning platforms, virtual simulations and interactive tools that enrich the learning experience. These technologies enable greater flexibility in training delivery and can improve learner engagement and motivation.

Quality performance indicators are used to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of vocational training systems. Quantitative indicators include certification success rates, professional integration rates, career progression of graduates and return on investment for employers. Qualitative indicators include learner satisfaction, employers' perception of the relevance of skills acquired, and the impact on individuals' personal and professional development.

International standards frameworks, such as ISO 21001 for management systems in education organizations and the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality) Management excellence model, offer guidelines for the implementation of quality management systems in training organizations. These frameworks encourage a systematic approach to continuous improvement, focusing on stakeholder satisfaction, the efficiency of internal processes and the strategic alignment of training objectives with business goals.

However, the implementation of these standards and the effective use of quality indicators present challenges. Training organizations need to adapt these frameworks to local contexts, taking into account cultural, economic and regulatory particularities. The complexity of the processes to be put in place, the need for resources for staff training and the need to develop a quality-focused organizational culture can present significant obstacles.

Furthermore, today's vocational training landscape is marked by a diversification of learning pathways and a growing demand for cross-disciplinary skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration. This calls for a more flexible, learner-centered approach that recognizes the importance of lifelong learning and the recognition of prior learning.

This literature review aims to deepen understanding of the characteristics and quality indicators of vocational training performance. Drawing on recent scientific studies and proven practices, it seeks to identify the key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of training schemes. The aim is to provide relevant insights for training managers, policy-makers and researchers, in order to improve the quality of vocational training.

II. Quality features in vocational training

Quality features in vocational training are essential to ensure that programs effectively meet the needs of learners and employers, contributing to the acquisition of relevant skills and improved employability in the labor market. The relevance of educational content is fundamental, as a curriculum aligned with industry needs improves the employability of graduates [1]. A mismatch between the skills taught and those demanded by employers can lead to structural unemployment [2]. Involving employers in program development enhances the relevance of content [3], and work-based learning reinforces this relevance by integrating practical experience [4]. Lifelong learning is crucial to keeping skills relevant [5]. Moreover, adapting programs to local contexts helps to meet the specific needs of regional markets [6].

The competence and expertise of trainers are crucial factors in the quality of vocational training. Well-trained and experienced trainers are essential for effective knowledge transmission [7]. They must possess dual skills, both pedagogical and technical [8], and their continuous improvement is emphasized to maintain a high level of quality [1]. The professional development of trainers enables them to adapt to new teaching methods [9], and globalization demands an understanding of international skills [10]. On-the-job learning is also beneficial for the trainers themselves [11], and solid initial training is necessary for vocational trainers [12].

The integration of educational technologies is playing an increasing role, offering new opportunities to personalize learning [13]. The use of e-learning platforms improves accessibility and flexibility [14], and e-learning can be as effective as traditional learning [15]. Technologies can enrich pedagogical methods [16], but their integration needs to be thought through to avoid digital inequalities [17]. The TPACK framework helps teachers to integrate technology effectively [18].

Accessibility and equity are essential components of quality vocational training. Inclusive education aims to ensure that all learners, including those with special needs, have access to quality education [19], and education policies must reduce socio-economic inequalities [6]. Inclusion requires pedagogical adaptations to meet diverse needs [20], and it is necessary to address structural inequalities [21]. Lifelong learning promotes equity [22], and education systems must be flexible to accommodate learners from different backgrounds [23].

Program flexibility is essential to meet the diverse needs of learners and the labor market. Education systems need to offer flexible learning pathways to facilitate access and progression [6]. The personalization of learning enables learners to be better engaged [24], and modular programs allow progressive accumulation of credits [25]. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning contributes to flexibility [26], and the use of technology can support personalized learning paths [27]. Flexibility is also key to lifelong learning [28].

Finally, collaboration with industry is essential to ensure that vocational training is aligned with the real needs of the labor market. Public-private partnerships can improve the relevance and quality of training [29], and employer involvement in program development promotes skills matching [30]. Work-based learning enriches learners' experience [31], and dual apprenticeships combine theory and practice [32]. Dual apprenticeship systems reinforce this collaboration [33], and vocational training models that strongly integrate employers are being examined for their effectiveness [34].

In summary, the characteristics of quality in vocational training are both multiple and interconnected, encompassing the relevance of pedagogical content, the competence of trainers, the integration of educational technologies, accessibility and equity, program flexibility and collaboration with industry. The harmonious integration of these elements is essential to provide effective, relevant vocational training that is perfectly adapted to the specific needs of learners and the requirements of the job market. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to strengthen partnerships with employers to align programs with current and future market needs, thus ensuring the relevance of the skills taught, and to promote ongoing training for trainers to maintain a high level of competence, enabling them to adapt to new teaching methods and technological advances.

III. Styling Performance Quality Indicators in Vocational Training

Quality indicators are essential for measuring and improving the performance of vocational training schemes. The job insertion rate is considered a key indicator of the effectiveness of a training program; a high graduate employment rate indicates that the training corresponds to the needs of the labor market [1]. For example, CEDEFOP has demonstrated that programs aligned with the skills demanded by employers have higher insertion rates [35]. However, this indicator needs to be analyzed in the light of the overall economic context and sectoral specificities, as external factors can influence employment rates [6].

Learner satisfaction is another important qualitative indicator; regular surveys help to identify program strengths and weaknesses, as satisfaction is often linked to perceptions of teaching quality, content relevance and available resources [36]. Richardson [37] points out that learner satisfaction is correlated with engagement and academic success. In addition, high satisfaction can lead to better motivation and higher retention rates [38].

The quality of the jobs obtained, assessed in terms of salary level, job stability and correspondence with the training taken, reflects the added value of the training for learners [39]. According to Brown et al [40], graduates who obtain high-quality jobs are more likely to perceive their training as beneficial and to recommend the program to others.

The pass rate for certifications is a quantitative indicator of academic performance; a high pass rate may indicate good teaching quality, appropriateness of pedagogical content and effectiveness of the assessment methods employed [41]. Yorke [42] notes that it can also reflect the level of preparation of learners and the effectiveness of the pedagogical support offered by the institution.

Learner engagement, measured by participation rate, attendance and personal investment, is also an indicator of the attractiveness and relevance of the training [43]. Interactive, learner-centered teaching methods can increase engagement, as suggested by Fredricks et al [44], who emphasize that engagement is multidimensional, including behavioral, emotional and cognitive aspects.

Finally, feedback from employers on graduates' skills is crucial for aligning training with market needs [45]. Harvey [46] notes that employers can provide valuable information for improving programs, adapting curricula and identifying emerging skills needed in the relevant occupational sector. This collaboration not only improves the relevance of training, but also strengthens partnerships between educational institutions and the world of work [44].

In conclusion, quality performance indicators in vocational training are essential for evaluating and improving programs, providing quantitative and qualitative information on training effectiveness. To ensure continuous improvement, it is crucial to set up graduate follow-up systems to collect data on their integration into the workforce, to conduct regular satisfaction surveys among learners and employers, and to continuously analyze these indicators to identify trends and areas requiring improvement. This enables us to adapt our programs to the needs of the job market and optimize the quality of our training programs.

IV. THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

International standards such as ISO 9001, ISO 21001 and the EFQM excellence model play a crucial role in quality assurance for vocational training organizations, providing frameworks for effective quality management. ISO 9001, the international standard for quality management systems, is widely used in various sectors to improve customer satisfaction and operational efficiency [47]. However, its direct applicability to the field of education is limited due to its generic nature and lack of specificity for educational processes [46].

To meet the specific needs of educational organizations, ISO 21001 was developed, specifying the requirements for a management system adapted to the education sector [48]. This standard emphasizes a learner-centered approach, aimed at improving stakeholder satisfaction through the effectiveness of educational processes. However, implementing ISO 21001 can present challenges, particularly in terms of the complexity and resources required, which can be an obstacle for smaller institutions [49].

The EFQM excellence model offers a holistic framework for assessing and improving organizational performance, focusing on criteria such as leadership, strategy, people, partnerships and processes [50]. It encourages a culture of excellence and continuous improvement. Nevertheless, its adoption requires deep commitment and a comprehensive understanding of the principles of excellence, which can represent a barrier for some organizations [51].

Despite the advantages of these standards, several limitations need to be considered. The complexity of the processes associated with their implementation can lead to significant administrative burdens and require substantial human and financial resources [52]. Adaptability to local contexts is also a major issue, as these international standards may not fully take into account the cultural, regulatory or pedagogical specificities of each country or institution [53]. What's more, an excessive focus on standardization can lead to a bureaucratization of processes, limiting the innovation and flexibility needed to meet the changing needs of learners [54].

In conclusion, although international standards such as ISO 9001, ISO 21001 and the EFQM model provide valuable frameworks for improving the quality of vocational training, their effective implementation requires thoughtful adaptation to the specifics of each organization. Institutions must be aware of the limitations of these standards, and ensure that their application reinforces, rather than constrains, their educational mission. Their effective implementation requires staff awareness and training on these standards, as well as adaptation to the specificities of the organization and the local context. In addition, management commitment is essential to support implementation and ensure continuous quality improvement.

V. THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

Despite ongoing efforts to improve the quality of vocational training, a number of challenges persist that hamper the effective implementation of initiatives. One of the main challenges is adaptability to rapid changes in the labor market. The skills required by employers are constantly evolving as a result of globalization, technological innovation and economic transformation, making it difficult for training programs to remain relevant. Studies highlight the need for training organizations to adopt an agile approach to continually adapting their educational content to the changing needs of the labor market [6].

Moreover, limited resources are a major obstacle to quality improvement. Budget constraints can limit institutions' ability to invest in modern infrastructure, educational technology and staff training. It is essential to allocate resources efficiently and strategically to maximize the impact on the quality of vocational training [7].

Stakeholder engagement is also crucial, but often difficult to achieve. Effectively involving employers, learners, trainers and policy-makers is essential to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of training programs. Establishing robust communication and collaboration mechanisms can facilitate the active participation of all stakeholders [46].

On the other hand, the integration of new technologies into vocational training presents significant challenges. The adoption of educational technologies requires not only appropriate infrastructures, but also technical skills on the part of educational staff. Staff training and professional development are crucial to ensure the successful integration of technologies into teaching practices [16].

In conclusion, the challenges inherent in improving quality in vocational training are undeniably complex, encompassing adaptability to rapid changes in the labor market, limited resources, stakeholder commitment and the integration of new technologies. However, these obstacles can be overcome through strategic planning and the ongoing commitment of training organizations. Developing partnerships to share resources and best practices is essential to optimize the use of available resources and benefit from collective expertise. In addition, investment in staff training is crucial to enhance the skills of trainers and administrative staff, ensuring that knowledge and teaching methods are constantly updated. Last but not least, the implementation of monitoring systems enables us to anticipate changes in the job market and proactively adapt training programs to emerging needs. By adopting these approaches, vocational training organizations can not only meet today's challenges, but also sustainably improve the quality of their programs to effectively respond to the evolving demands of the job market.

VI. CONCLUSION

Vocational training is an essential lever for economic and social development, preparing individuals to meet the changing demands of the job market. This study has highlighted the fundamental characteristics that determine the quality of this training: relevance of pedagogical content, competence of trainers, integration of educational technologies, accessibility and equity, flexibility of programs and close collaboration with industry. These interconnected elements form the basis of effective training, adapted to the specific needs of learners and market trends.

Performance indicators, such as professional integration rates, learner satisfaction, job quality, certification success rates, learner commitment and employer feedback, play a crucial role in program evaluation and continuous improvement. They provide invaluable data for identifying strengths and areas for improvement, enabling institutions to make informed adjustments to their pedagogical and organizational strategies.

An analysis of international standards, notably ISO 9001, ISO 21001 and the EFQM excellence model, has shown that they offer structured frameworks for quality assurance in vocational training. However, their implementation requires adaptation to the specificities of each organization and consideration of local contexts, in order to preserve pedagogical flexibility and avoid excessive bureaucratization.

The challenges identified, such as adaptability to rapid changes in the labor market, limited resources, stakeholder commitment and the integration of new technologies, underline the complexity inherent in improving quality in vocational training. To overcome these obstacles, it is essential to develop strong partnerships between training institutions, employers, governments and other stakeholders, in order to pool resources, knowledge and best practices. Investment in the training and professional development of trainers is also crucial to maintaining a high level of competence and adapting to pedagogical and technological innovations.

Adopting a proactive and agile approach is imperative for training organizations wishing to remain relevant. This involves continually updating educational content in line with emerging labor market needs, and integrating innovative pedagogical methods that promote learner engagement and success. The strategic use of educational technologies can offer flexible and personalized solutions, enhancing learning effectiveness.

Reinforcing learner involvement by actively engaging them in their course and valuing their feedback helps to improve training quality. Similarly, systematically integrating feedback from employers helps to align the skills taught with market expectations, thus reinforcing the relevance of programs.

Monitoring systems and continuous assessment mechanisms are essential to anticipate future trends and ensure constant quality improvement. Cultivating a culture of excellence and innovation, underpinned by strong leadership and a clear strategic vision, is essential for training institutions.

Ultimately, improving the quality of vocational training is a dynamic, multi-dimensional process that requires close collaboration between all the players involved. By addressing the challenges identified and capitalizing on the opportunities offered by new technologies and international standards, it is possible to develop training programs that effectively meet the needs of learners and the labor market, thus contributing to sustainable economic and social development.

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