

Excellence Initiative in Serbia

Achieving Excellence in Secondary Education



A tool that proves to be useful to ensure the long-term sustainable growth of the secondary education in a dynamic and unpredictable environment, is the EFQM Excellence Model. Indeed, the deployment of this kind of approach within secondary education can lead to more competitiveness and an increase of the quality of the work in educational institutions. In that sense, a project around regional education development and employment incentive was started in 2009 in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture of Lower Saxony (Germany) and GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (exGTZ) GmbH). *Zeljka Kovacev, Quality manager at the Economic Trade School (ETS) Becej (Serbia) shares with us her school's experience...*

The goal of this project was - through the motivation of local authorities, regional organisations, schools and local company representatives - to test a model of decentralised and joint approach to both regional and organisational development of secondary vocational schools. This experiment was named Regional Centres of Competence, in short ReCeKo. In total, twelve secondary schools in Serbia took part in this experiment, including the ETS Becej. Between 2009 and 2013, the participants of the programme worked on the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model in their respective schools and received the necessary support, in the form of training and counselling, through GIZ and experts from Lower Saxony. However, not all schools were successful. This can be explained by

the general indecisiveness of the management to accept the new scheme of school organisation and management.

An important step that helped ensure the success of the ETS Becej, however, was an exchange of experiences and study of examples of good practices with other schools implementing the EFQM Excellence Model. In this regard, the visit to the secondary school, BBS2 in Osterode am Harz (EFQM Recognised for Excellence) was particularly important, explains Mrs Kovacev: *"During this event, we took the opportunity to exchange our experiences about the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model. We discussed ways of solving daily challenges within our schools, and compared our*

systems of documentation management. What was particularly useful was the advices on getting prepared for the upcoming visit of the external evaluators."

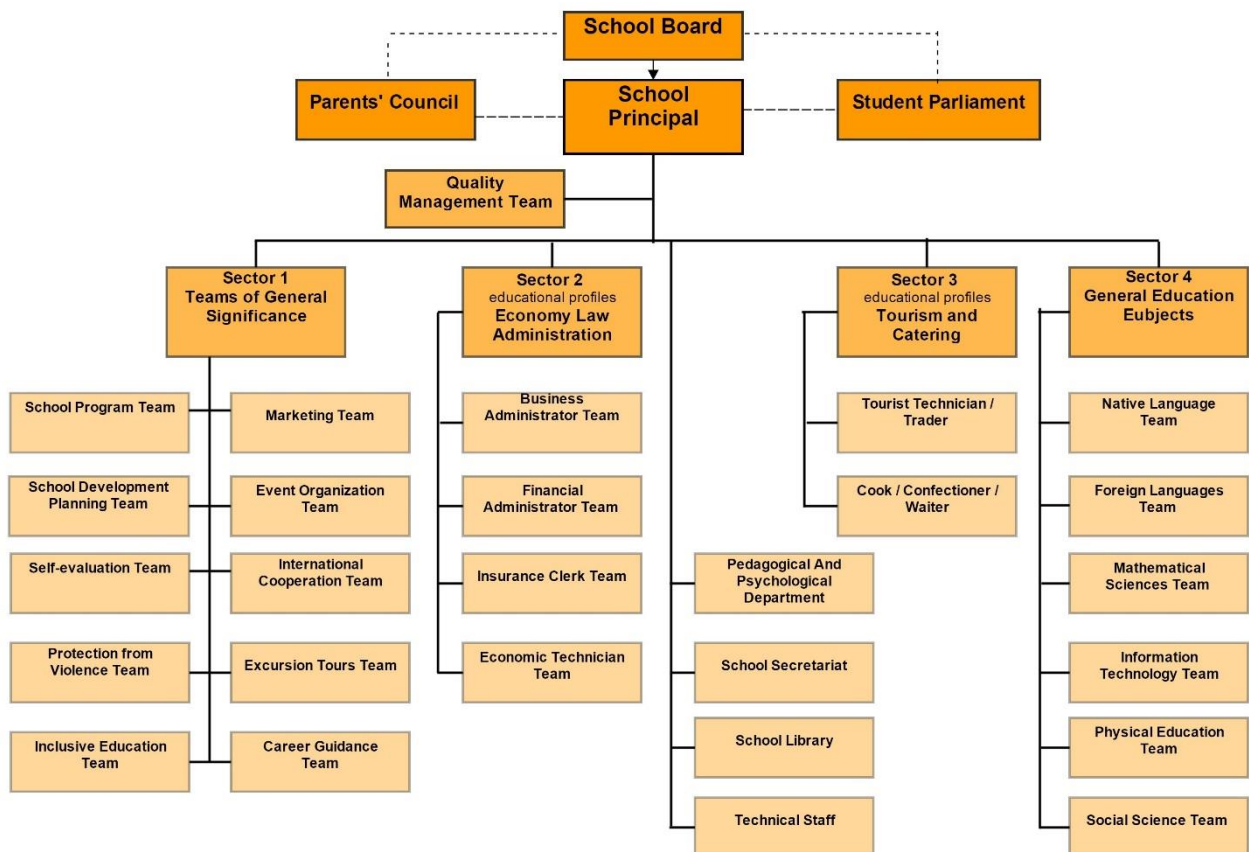
Another factor that made the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model harder for schools participating in the ReCeKo project was the low motivation of the employees. Zeljka Kovacev explains how her school managed to get over this obstacle: "At the very beginning of the project it was evident that the school had to go through a transformation because the existing management model was not suitable for the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model. This change took place over three years, with a well-planned

agenda to create a new quality management Model for the school"

The transformation included:

- The modification of the school mission, vision and values integrating the desire of the school to become the regional centre for providing quality education in accordance with the needs of the regional economy;
- The definition of a new organisational structure, now more flexible and dynamic. The new management model underlines the importance of setting up working teams and their harmonious functioning within the school;

**Economic-Trade School Becej
Organizational Chart**



- The designation of a quality manager and the participation of the quality management team in trainings as they are the people in charge of quality management and the implementation of the EFQM Model
- The documentation of the new quality system and its implementation (management manual, procedures, notes), process definition/listing;
- The creation of a process map, the coordination of the processes, goal structure and organisational structure, detailed description and elaboration of the process;
- The assignment of owners for every process and a structured planning of their assessment as well as a review of it;
- The planning of an annual self-assessment against the EFQM Excellence Model;
- Project development and application of Document Management System (DMS) * This Document Management System was designed and developed in the school itself. It helps the employees by giving them an easier and safer way to access and upload, via Internet, all school documentation. It is used daily for communication among the employees.

This new quality management model has allowed the school to greatly improve its

way of functioning. After the project's completion, the Economic-trade school decided to apply for the Oscar of Quality Award organised by the Fund for Quality Culture and Excellence FQCE¹, to validate the successful implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model.

To get ready to go through this evaluation, the school's quality manager, Mrs Zeljka Kovacev, received the training for self-evaluation with the excellence model FQCE and conducted all the preparations for the school's participation in the Oscar of Quality in 2014. ETS Becej received great support from GIZ, as well as significant support in the form of professional advice from the Centre of Excellence from Nurnberg (Germany). The same year, the school won the Oscar of Quality for human resources in the category "public sector organisations". This confirms that the application of the EFQM Excellence Model definitely helped improve the school's performance. In addition to the acknowledgments from FQCE, the school's achievements have been recognised by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia among others.

To sum up, this success could probably be the start of a future wider deployment of the EFQM Excellence Model in the education sector in Serbia...

¹ This is the national partner that runs the National Award for Business Excellence (The Oscar of Quality)