

4th European CAF Users Event, Bucharest, 23-24 September 2010

***Progressing Towards Excellence
The Challenge for European Public Administrations in Difficult Times***

**CAF as a tool for reporting on educational quality
and a backdrop for drawing up political objectives**

1. Identification

Reference/ Session: S5.3.

	<p>Organisation: Nord-Trøndelag County Municipality</p> <p>Country: Norway</p> <p>Name case presenter(s): Even Fossum Svendsen, Chief Education Officer</p> <p>@ : even-fossum.svendsen@ntfk.no</p> <p>Phone: +4790603404</p> <p>Website: www.ntfk.no</p>
<p>- et ansvar for FYLKESTINGET i Nord-Trøndelag </p>	<p>Focus:</p> <p>Leadership and constancy of purpose</p>

Case presentation

2. Quality Improvement issues – the broader scope of excellence

The work with quality has become more and more a part of the leadership, both in the schools and at the sector level in Nord-Trøndelag. When implementing quality development and the CAF-model, the political level was an important part of the decision-making process, and requester of quality results. This has led us to a closer coherence between challenges in the school, management and political objectives – a constancy of purpose.

3. Case background

With strong political support, the Common Assessment Framework was applied in the educational sector in Nord-Trøndelag County in 2005. After having delivered the 5th Annual Quality Report, the County Council now seems to handle the quality results in a quite adequate way. The CAF assessment results from the sector, both average and individual for the different schools, are used now as the main evidence for setting targets and objectives.

4. The Actors and levels of quality:

- Upper secondary schools, department of education
- Counsellor of Education, Chief Education Officer/education sector
- County Council, Committee of Education

5. The Work process / the Approach

The quality development system was designed in 2005. The different tools of the quality system are linked to the stages of the PDCA cycle and essential elements of the Excellent model, such as:

- The CAF model
- Process knowledge and development
- Stakeholder chart
- Organisational learning
- Strategic impacts
- Balanced scorecard

The most important element of the quality system is the CAF model – providing quality results as a backdrop for defining status at all levels. The development of roles in the quality work has led to an increased spend of resources to the administrative sector level. This includes the establishment of one-day site visits at all schools, leadership contracts, quality scorecards, seminars and following up the quality work according to the annual quality plan.

These steps are surveyed by the sector level, the Chief Education Officer, and are followed up in the dialogue of steering of the schools. The most important challenges of each school, provided by the annual CAF assessment, are origin for the further detailed results-orientated steering of the school. This will be the working targets for the school director and in the quality chart of the school. The quality chart is derived from the Balanced Scorecard, and based upon the principles of Excellence.

Also, the CAF model could be seen as the base of the steering or management system of the education sector. This means that the assessment results are used at all levels to identify challenges and to pinpoint objectives and areas of development, and used as the most important strategic steering-information of the County Council, the administrative sector level and the school management.

The annual Quality Report presents the average results from the CAF-assessment, the CAF-assessment results from each organisation/school and important background data from the areas of customer results, people results and key performance results. These data contain results from sources like student-, teacher- and people surveys, and target achievement in areas as student grades, absence and drop-out.

In this way, the work with following up evidence or assessment results is handled at 3 levels. First of all this will be the most important action during the year in each school. Through the 17 tools of the local quality development system, the schools analyze and carefully prioritise the most important areas of improvement, setting up a plan of corrections and planning the different prioritised action. The second level is the work of the Chief Education officer and department of education; providing knowledge and monitoring results. The third level is the annual discussion in the County Council on the results from the Quality Report and the following target setting.

6. The Measure of Success

The schools have reported that CAF is a convenient tool. This includes the use of the tailor-made version of the school examples and an annex of compulsory evidence material linked to each of the sub-criteria's, to fulfil the claims of the education law. The annual measurement of the quality in the entire sector, the handling and target-setting of the areas of improvement, and following up the results, has led to measurable development.

A large amount of people in the education sector - from teachers, office/technical personnel to managers are involved every year in the work with quality, and this had lead to a more awareness. We can now detect considerable progress in several areas of improvement from one year to another. The annual discussion of the Quality Report by the County Council, are based upon the CAF assessment, and some of the most important evidence in use. The political level has a comprehensive understanding of the principles of Excellence and the usage of the CAF model, as a tool for development. On this basis the County Council will provide adequate targets - not actions.

7. The main obstacles

This approach of quality, linked to the system of steering and the processes of setting targets, are might seen as quite vigorous. We have revealed that some of the enthusiasm that appeared in the beginning is not at the same level. This might have influence on the willingness of change.

8. Lessons learned

The strive to connect the principles of Excellence, Quality management, Quality development, CAF and the work with setting targets and strategic objectives at all levels have led to a closer link between these elements the last 5 years, and at last, could be seen as a whole. The huge effort made to follow up the assessments, the work with quality and the results from the entire education sector has been the key factor for success, and have lead to a stronger constancy of purpose and a raised sustainability of quality throughout the entire educational sector. The involvement and the strong link to the political level will be the survival tool for keeping the cycle moving.