

Peer review in Tanzania – learning together towards the project goals

The Kilimanjaro VET (Vocational Education and Training) project's peer review, which took place in spring 2025, showed notable progress. Its results highlighted significant advancements in both competence-based education and the use of digital tools among Tanzanian educational institutions.

While facing challenges like limited resources and resistance to change, the review's results underscored the powerful effect of collaborative evaluation and continuous professional development. This approach holds the promise of improving educational quality and leading to better student outcomes.



Peer Review Meeting in Moshi (Photo: Kimmo Kuortti).

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1 Introduction

A peer review was conducted for the Kilimanjaro VET (Vocational Education and Training) project in spring 2025, organized by the School of Professional Teacher Education at Oulu University of Applied Sciences. The review's main purpose was to bring project partners together to share emerging good practices, develop them collectively, and evaluate the project's progress to ensure it remains on track to meet its goals.

The review also aimed to strengthen collaboration among institutions for mutual development and identify areas for growth and innovation in teaching methodologies. Ultimately, by facilitating this exchange of insights, the peer review is expected to enhance educational quality and lead to better student outcomes.

The peer review was based on specific evaluation criteria (Appendix 1) that allowed project participants to assess each other's development activities against the project's core objectives:

- Improving the pedagogical skills of VET teachers and trainers.
- Enabling continuous professional development for teachers.
- Utilizing digital solutions in teaching.
- Building local, regional, and international networks.

The criteria were designed to be applicable to all educational fields, levels, and development activities across the project's different phases. Participants in the project's training (Work Package 2) were also given the opportunity to comment on the criteria.

The evaluation was carried out by forming three peer review pairs from the educational institutions involved in the project. The pairs evaluated one another based on the criteria and wrote a corresponding evaluation report.

The entire process followed the EQAVET framework (Figure 1), which defines the stages of a peer review as planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment, and review and improvement. The activities were guided by key principles to ensure quality, including

planning, expertise, equal standing, independence, a criteria-based approach, confidentiality, and usefulness.

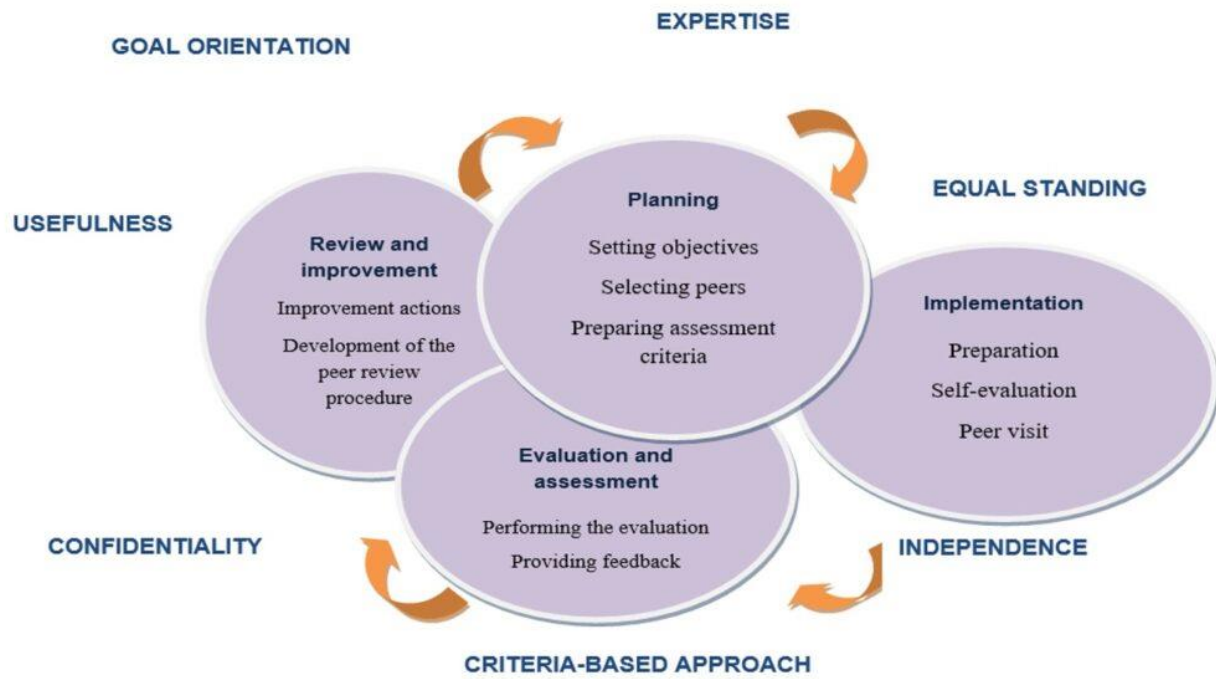


FIGURE 1. European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET) and quality assurance of the peer review method.

2 Planning the peer review

The planning of the peer review was initiated in October 2024 with a webinar led by senior lecturer Erja Kotimäki from Oulu University of Applied Sciences. She presented the concept and key principles of peer review to participants in Work Package 2. The webinar also provided an opportunity to collaboratively discuss and modify the initial draft of the criteria, which was prepared based on the project's objectives. These criteria were then revisited in a subsequent webinar in November.

The final evaluation criteria (Appendix 1) and the Tasks for reviewers and interviewees (Appendix 2) were uploaded to the project's shared Howspace platform. In January 2025,

three peer review pairs were formed from the project's educational institutions in Moshi, Tanzania:

1. Mawella VTC and ELCT Hai VTC
2. ELCT Hai VTC and Veta Moshi RVTSC
3. Veta Moshi RVTSC and Mawella VTC

To ensure a fair and objective process, the pairings were designed so that no institution would evaluate an institution that had also evaluated it.

Since peer review was a new process for many participants, an initial orientation was held, followed by more detailed introductions to the process in webinars in November 2024 and January 2025. All reviewers attended the orientation and received additional guidance as needed.

The review itself was scheduled for February 2025. To ensure a thorough evaluation, each participating institution was required to select one to two reviewers. These individuals were chosen based on their deep involvement in the project or their extensive knowledge of its activities, as well as their motivation to participate.

3 Implementation of the peer review

In the webinars organized prior to the review, participants accomplished the following tasks:

- They familiarized themselves with the peer review process and criteria.
- They agreed on the division of work and the preliminary materials needed for the review.
- They prepared for the self-assessment and upcoming interviews.

Before the official peer review meeting, each institution conducted a self-assessment based on the project's criteria. While the institutions were given the flexibility to decide who participated, the instruction was for the self-assessment to be conducted by the key people involved in the project's activities. The completed self-assessment was then submitted to the corresponding peer review pair ahead of the meeting.

Reviewers were tasked with reviewing the self-assessment and all preliminary materials they had received prior to the meeting. For the peer review meetings, each institution selected two teachers and two supervisors to be interviewed. These groups were interviewed separately to ensure distinct perspectives.

The peer review meetings were scheduled for three days from February 4–6, 2025. These dates were chosen to coincide with the visit of trainers Kimmo Kuortti and Iiris Happonen from Oulu University of Applied Sciences, ensuring they could participate in the meetings in Moshi, Tanzania. The programs for the peer review meetings were planned ahead of time ([appendix 3](#)).

Reviewers independently prepared interview questions based on the project's criteria. They were instructed to apply the given criteria by selecting the most relevant ones for the specific project implementation phase. To ensure accuracy and documentation, the evaluation interviews and summary discussions were recorded, and the recordings were submitted to Erja Kotimäki.

Reviewers were responsible for assessing each institution's strengths and areas for development, as well as providing concrete suggestions for improvement. The assessments were recorded on a criteria form using a scale of “implemented,” “partially implemented,” or “not implemented.” A summary of good practices and development needs was also attached to the form. The evaluators submitted their final reports to both the institution they evaluated and to Erja Kotimäki.

4 Peer review results

Next, based on the information produced by the peer review, it will be examined how the objectives set for the Kilimanjaro VET project have been achieved.

The results were compiled from the recordings of peer review interviews, summary discussions, and the peer review reports themselves. These findings included comprehensive summaries of the project's strengths and areas for development. Since the peer review was conducted with approximately one year remaining in the project, the results provide a valuable snapshot of an ongoing process, not a final outcome.

4.1 Improving the pedagogical skills of VET teachers and trainers

Criteria:

- Implements competence-based approach in different substance fields.
- Develops curriculum together with competence-based learning principle.
- Implements competence-based learning modules which include competence goals and assessment criteria.
- Uses competency-based teaching approaches.
- Provides pedagogy tailored education for students with special needs and equity work.

According to the reviewers, the project's evaluation criteria have been achieved quite well overall, receiving an average score of 2 on a scale of 1 to 3. The only criterion that was assessed as the least implemented across all educational institutions was "Develops curriculum together with competence-based learning principle," which received a score of 1.

Interviews with both teachers and supervisors revealed that the competence-based approach offers numerous benefits for teaching and learning. It ensures students acquire relevant skills through practical application, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving abilities that prepare them to meet community and industry needs. This method also encourages lifelong learning by emphasizing real-world applications, promoting autonomy, and building confidence among learners.

Teachers reported using a variety of methods in their competence-based lessons, including:

- Participatory Learning: Engaging both teachers and students in the learning process through group discussions and hands-on activities.
- Project-Based Learning: Encouraging students to prepare and present projects to reinforce skills.

- Real-World Application: Utilizing case studies, role-plays, and visits to enterprises to enhance understanding and entrepreneurial skills.
- Digital Tools: Incorporating digital tools like projectors and PowerPoint for presentations.

The effectiveness of teaching is supported by resources such as computers, projectors, books, and training tools. Teachers are also trained to support students with special needs using methods like sign language and specialized equipment. New teachers are advised to focus on skills, knowledge, and attitudes rather than memorization, acting as facilitators in a learner-centered environment.

Both teachers and leaders reported facing several challenges in implementing competence-based education:

- Insufficient Resources and Infrastructure: Some schools lack modern teaching materials and technology.
- Resistance to Change: Teachers, students, and parents may resist the shift from traditional to competence-based methods.
- Difficulties in Assessment: Competence-based assessments require performance-based tasks, which can be subjective and difficult to track in large classes.
- Lack of Training: Many teachers struggle to adapt to the new approach due to insufficient training.
- Large Class Sizes: Managing and tracking student progress is difficult with large class sizes.

To improve teaching effectiveness, teachers expressed a need for frequent seminars and workshops to stay updated on current practices. They also emphasized the necessity of institutional support in providing digital tools and modern equipment.

Collaboration among colleagues is encouraged to improve teaching effectiveness through shared lesson plans, resources, and joint seminars. Institutional leadership supports teachers by providing short- and long-term training, upgrading facilities, and ensuring materials align with industry needs.

In conclusion, implementing a competence-based approach enhances the pedagogical skills of VET teachers, ultimately benefiting students by equipping them with the relevant skills needed for the labor market. The strengths and areas for development in this area are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Improving the pedagogical skills of VET teachers and trainers. Strengths and areas for improvement.

Strengths
• Teachers effectively use student-centered learning strategies.
• Assessments are aligned with competency-based learning outcomes.
• Students actively participate in hands-on learning activities.
• Workshops on active learning, project-based learning, and competency-based education are provided.
• Annual performance evaluations include self-assessment and classroom observations, with feedback from students and industry partners informing professional development plans.
• Teachers have access to online resources and are encouraged to share best practices through peer observation. A dedicated pedagogical advisor provides support and guidance.

- A combination of methods, including student achievement data, classroom observations, teacher self-reflection, and student feedback surveys, is used to assess teachers' effectiveness.

- A mix of hands-on activities, group projects, and real-world simulations are used in teaching.

- Industry case studies and guest speakers are incorporated to make learning more relevant and engaging, moving away from purely lecture-based teaching.

- Workshops on competency-based education help design learning activities focused on specific skills and outcomes, making assessments more focused on demonstrable skills.

Areas for improvement

- Limited resources, large class sizes, and resistance to change from some teachers are challenges in improving pedagogical skills.

- Keeping up with the rapid pace of technological advancements is difficult.

- Challenges with Competence-Based Education (CBE) and Student-Centered Learning: Developing and implementing student-centered activities can be time-consuming. Managing diverse learning needs and ensuring active participation from all students is challenging. Some students are more comfortable with traditional lecture-based learning and resistant to more active approaches.

• More training on differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners would be appreciated.
• Additional resources for developing authentic assessments would be helpful.
• Time for collaboration with other teachers to share ideas would be invaluable.
• More real-world application projects should be introduced.
• Formative assessment strategies need improvement.
• Some teachers need additional training on differentiated instruction.

The institutions have made significant progress in implementing a competence-based education approach. This shift has resulted in higher student engagement and better problem-solving skills, as teachers now focus on student-centered learning and encourage students to participate actively and solve problems independently.

To further enhance these learning outcomes, continued improvements in professional training, assessment strategies, and technology integration will be essential.

4.2 Enabling continuous teachers' professional development

The goal is to enable continuous professional development for VET (Vocational Education and Training) teachers and trainers by forwarding the skills learned in the project.

Criteria:

- Forwarding pedagogical skills learned in the project.

- Forwarding digital skills learned in the project.
- Forwarding entrepreneurial skills learned in the project.
- Forwarding skills learned about students with special needs.

According to the reviewers, the evaluation criteria have been met with a grade of 2 (on a scale of 1-3) across all criteria. Teachers have received training in various pedagogical approaches, which has significantly improved student performance. The organizations support continuous professional development through several opportunities:

- Regular discussions on competence-based education, held weekly in one school.
- Participation in various project work packages, including competence-based education, special needs education, and entrepreneurial skills.
- Workshops and seminars focused on improving pedagogical skills, though not all teachers have attended.
- Online courses and seminars that allow teachers to study while working.
- Opportunities for teachers to share knowledge and collectively improve teaching methods.

Organizations support teachers by providing dedicated time for these discussions and knowledge sharing. They also offer opportunities for further education and professional development, and they facilitate access to modern digital tools and equipment.

Teachers expressed a need for more training in digital tools and competence-based education. They also highlighted the importance of engaging more of their colleagues in these programs to keep up with technological advancements. Both teachers and supervisors agreed that collaboration and networking are crucial for professional development. There is also a desire to increase partnerships and cooperation with external trainers.

The organizations provide internet packages to support continuous learning, encouraging teachers to stay updated with the latest developments in their fields. This fosters a culture

of professional growth. However, a significant challenge is a lack of resources, particularly digital tools and materials.

In conclusion, the strengths and areas for development are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Enabling continuous teachers’ professional development. Strengths and areas for improvement.

Strengths
• Some teachers have received basic training in special needs education.
• Initial steps have been taken to improve digital skills and entrepreneurial education.
• Teachers are using digital tools to enhance student-centered learning.
• Various CPD opportunities such as workshops, seminars, online courses, and industry attachments are offered.
• Teachers are supported in attending conferences and training programs from other institutions.
• A structured CPD program is offered regularly throughout the year, covering vocational education aspects like pedagogy, curriculum development, assessment, and technology integration.
• Close links with industry partners are maintained, including participation in industry advisory boards.

- Subscriptions to relevant journals and online resources help keep abreast of emerging trends.

- Experienced teachers' mentor newer colleagues.

- Teachers read industry journals, follow online forums, attend industry conferences, and network with professionals.

- Online training sessions are attended by teachers.

- Continuous support is provided to teachers for adopting best practices in Competence-Based Education.

- In one school mentorship meetings are held every Friday to facilitate learning and sharing among teachers.

- Opportunities for field studies and industrial visits are provided.

- Teachers respond to customer needs and collaborate on planning and platforming.

Areas for improvement

- Need for more comprehensive training on differentiated instruction and assessment methods.

• Expansion of strategies and resources for special needs education.
• Exploration of the possibility of establishing a formal coaching program.
• Increase the number and frequency of training opportunities.
• Focus more on vocational-specific training and emerging technologies.
• Provide training on the latest industry software and equipment.
• Enhance access to online resources and databases related to the field.
• Offer more opportunities for industry attachments.

4.3 Utilizing digital solutions

Criteria:

- Uses the applications of new technological and digital means of teaching and interactions.
- Uses and develops digital open badges and open educational resources (digital material).

According to the reviewers, the evaluation criteria have been met with a grade of 2 (on a scale of 1-3) across all criteria.

Based on feedback from teachers and supervisors, the most common digital tools in classrooms are laptops, projectors, and phones. Teachers use these tools to find teaching materials, although some schools do not allow students to use phones in class. Schools have computer labs with network connections for students. While teachers often use their own internet connections, they can request support from the principal's office.

Teachers are generally comfortable using digital tools as they simplify teaching. However, they face challenges with large class sizes and varying student abilities. Teachers and students receive training, such as tutorials at the start of the school year, to help them use these tools effectively. E-learning tools like projectors and internet resources are used to enhance teaching and learning, and students are given assignments that require online research.

Different competence-based teaching methods are used to cater to diverse student needs. For example, active learning methods engage students through hands-on activities, group work, and problem-solving. Digital tools make teaching more interactive and student-centered, which is particularly appealing to younger students.

In computer classes, students learn to use digital tools like Microsoft Word and Excel. Due to school regulations, they are not allowed to use mobile phones outside these classes. During computer sessions, students can access online materials for any subject.

According to the interviewees technology has significantly improved teaching by providing access to a wide range of resources and materials online. Challenges include the potential for students to access inappropriate content and the high cost of some technological tools.

Teachers need a permanent internet connection and more digital tools, such as projectors, to integrate technology more effectively into their classrooms. In some schools, the IT department provides support for setting up and maintaining digital tools.

Major challenges include insufficient internet capacity, a lack of digital tools, and the high cost of technology. The schools collaborate with other vocational training centers and international organizations to improve learning and professional development. They are actively working on enhancing internet access for educational purposes and increasing the availability of digital tools and resources.

In conclusion, the strengths and areas for development are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Utilizing digital solutions. Strenghts and areas of improvement.

Strenghts
• Teachers are using digital tools to enhance student-centered learning.
• Training is provided on various educational technologies, including learning management systems, interactive whiteboards, and online collaboration tools.
• An IT support team assists teachers with technical issues.
• Training programs on using digital tools for lesson planning, content delivery, assessment, and student engagement.
• Training on software relevant to different vocational fields.
• Use of online platforms to share course materials, assignments, and announcements.
• Interactive simulations and online quizzes to make learning more engaging.
• Encouragement for students to collaborate on projects using online tools.
• Technology facilitates personalized feedback to students.

- Access to a wide range of resources is made easier through technology.

Areas of improvement

- More training is needed on using digital tools such as MS Office, Google Drive, Howspace, Kahoot, Padlet, and Flina.

- The institutions should focus on establishing a central internet connection to support e-learning.

- Limited internet access and lack of digital literacy among some teachers and students are key challenges.

- More investing in infrastructure improvements and providing targeted training programs.

- Managing technical issues in the classroom can be challenging, and technology may not always work as expected.

- More training on using specific educational software and troubleshooting technical problems would be helpful.

- Increased support from the IT department in setting up and maintaining digital tools in the classroom is needed. Trainees have limited access to software in computer labs, often restricted to specific class times.

- More access, possibly through cloud-based solutions or take-home licenses, would be beneficial, especially for e-learning.

4.4 Networking locally, regionally and internationally

Criteria:

- Supports networking of VET-related organisations locally and regionally in Tanzania.
- Supports networking of VET-related organisations internationally.

The organizations participate in various professional networks and partnerships both within and outside Tanzania. For example, they are members of the Kilimanjaro VET network, which includes relationships with different institutions. Staff members also belong to professional associations relevant to their fields, such as accountants with CPA certifications and mechanics associations.

According to teachers and leaders, networking with institutions and partners from Finland has significantly impacted teaching methods. Teachers have learned about competence-based education and have benefited from peer review evaluations. They have also visited other institutions to learn practical skills, such as building techniques and carpentry, which they then apply in their own teaching. Both teachers and students participate in exchange programs and industry visits.

The organizations collaborate with local industries for student internships and practical training. Companies like Nei (vanilla production) and Seedle (metal industry) host students for hands-on learning experiences. Students can spend three months in theoretical training and three months in industry for practical work. This hands-on experience makes them highly skilled and preferred by industries, especially in hospitality. Their industry placements are an examinable part of their program, and they ensure that their training aligns with current industry standards. Teachers also receive training based on industry needs and standards to ensure they can effectively teach relevant skills.

The organizations maintain strong networks with these industries to ensure quality training. Teachers visit students during their field attachments to gather feedback from both students and industry supervisors. The curriculum is updated based on this feedback, ensuring that training programs remain relevant and aligned with current industry standards.

Leadership encourages networking and collaboration with other vocational training centres and industries. For example, partnerships with ECOP and Avanti support student training and infrastructure development. The organizations also collaborate with local banks and companies for support in training and resources.

The organizations participate in exchange programs with international partners to learn new technologies and teaching methods. International donors support one of the organizations by providing resources and expertise, such as training on electric motorcycles.

To support continuous learning, the organizations provide internet access and encourage teachers to engage in professional development. Teachers are also encouraged to learn and share knowledge, which fosters a collaborative learning environment.

Teachers suggest continuing and expanding networking with other institutions and industries, both locally and internationally. They emphasize that adequate funding is essential for facilitating these travel and networking opportunities.

In conclusion, strengths and areas for development are presented in table 4.

TABLE 4. Networking locally, regionally and internationally. Strengths and areas of improvement.

Strengths
• Institutions have local, regional, and international networks that support knowledge sharing, tools, and teaching materials.

- Teachers work closely with industry representatives to ensure curriculum and training programs align with current industry standards and emerging technologies.

- Partnerships with several vocational training institutions in the region facilitate teacher and student exchanges.

- Collaboration with teachers from other VET institutions on developing curriculum materials.

- A professional learning community is established where teachers can share best practices, lesson plans, and resources.

- Peer observation and co-teaching are encouraged.

- Regular skills gap analyses are conducted.

- Industry professionals are invited to guest lecture, conduct workshops, and participate in curriculum development.

- Teachers are encouraged to undertake industry attachments to stay updated on industry trends.

- Networking helps to stay relevant, improve the quality of training, and provide students with access to the latest technologies and industry practices.

• Sharing ideas with other instructors, learning about new teaching strategies, and staying updated on industry trends.
• Building professional relationships and finding resources through networking.
Areas for improvement
• Strengthening local and international networking for knowledge exchange.
• Actively seeking opportunities for international collaborations.
• Pursuing partnerships with international organizations and institutions to enhance capacity in vocational education.
• Exploring opportunities for attracting global expertise through visiting professorships and collaborative projects.
• Increasing opportunities for teacher exchange programs or company visits.

5 Feedback on the implementation and benefits of peer review

Before the peer review session, all participants submitted self-assessments and preliminary materials to the reviewers. The reviewers then used these materials to prepare

and identify key areas to focus on during the evaluation. All discussions were lively, successful, and conducted at the institutions, lasting about one hour each. They enriched and clarified the written evaluations and deepened the understanding of related topics. The discussions were also well-focused on issues relevant to the peer review process. Both the self-assessments and peer reviews were very well prepared.

The reviews in all educational institutions clearly focused on the implementation of competence-based education. Some evaluation criteria were not yet assessed as they were not yet relevant to the project.

It was particularly appreciated that the peer review provided an opportunity to get to know another vocational institution and its staff within the region. The teachers acting as reviewers did not necessarily know the other institution's operations beforehand. While this required good preliminary preparation, it provided a valuable opportunity to learn many new things.

Peer review also provided an opportunity to assess the progress of the project, evaluate the choices made, and their effectiveness. It would be beneficial to conduct another evaluation with the same criteria at the end of the project to determine how the project's goals have been achieved. A repeated evaluation later would allow for a clearer view of the project's development trajectory and final results.

In peer review, it is crucial to recognize one's strengths and identify areas for improvement. The interviews particularly emphasized that peer review enabled mutual learning. The discussions selected the right aspects to be examined, and the evaluation forced participants to consider what they were doing, what needed to be done, and what should be left undone. Overall, the peer review helped to check the progress against the project's goals and provided a comprehensive overview of the project.

Collaborative thinking was important, and receiving feedback as a form of peer support was valuable, as it strengthened the operations of both the individual and the institution. It was also important to receive development ideas. Peer review promoted the documentation of activities already in progress during the project.

Peer review increases the impact of the project. The results obtained are already affecting the operations of the educational institutions, as activities have been implemented and

disseminated within the organizations. As noted in the peer review reports: "Peer review must definitely be included in the next project as well."

6 Conclusions and development suggestions

The primary goal of the peer review was to support the project's objectives and evaluate the solutions created within it. The review brought together participants from various educational institutions to share emerging best practices, collaborate on further development, and assess the project's progress and results. According to the feedback, participants were very satisfied with the process and felt they learned a great deal from each other.

The objectives set for the peer review were successfully achieved. By focusing the evaluation on the project's goals and specific criteria, we were able to effectively monitor its progress. The solutions developed within the project were a direct result of collaboration between supervisors and teachers and aligned seamlessly with project goals. The peer review confirmed that the project's activities are of high quality and progressing smoothly.

While the project has made excellent progress towards its goals (achieving a grade of 2 on almost all criteria), it would be beneficial to conduct a follow-up evaluation in the fall of 2025. This would allow us to review the progress made since the first evaluation. Furthermore, it would provide an opportunity to more thoroughly assess criteria that received less scrutiny this time, such as the development of a competence-based curriculum, special needs education, and entrepreneurship teaching.

A sincere thank you to everyone who participated in the peer review and to those at the institutions who made it possible. I also extend my gratitude to Kimmo and Iiris for their excellent support in implementing the review in Tanzania.

Erja Kotimäki

tiimipäällikkö, lehtori

Ammatillinen opettajankoulutus

Kilimanjaro VET – Capacity Tanzania

Aims: The project aims to build vocational education capacity in Moshi, Kilimanjaro area in Tanzania. Main efforts are

- improving pedagogical skills of the teachers
- improving digital skills
- improving entrepreneurial skills.
- promoting equal opportunities and inclusion (pedagogy tailored for students with special needs and equity work).

Duration: 1.1.2023–31.12.2025

Funders: Erasmus+

Coordinator: Educational Consortium OSAO (VET)

Partners:

- Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Finland
- Kuressaare Ametikool, Estonia
- The Vocational Education and Training Authority VETA, Tanzania
- Mawella VTC and Moshi RVTSC, Tanzania
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
- Tanzania Volunteers

Subcontractor: Luovi Finland

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Tiivistelmä: In the Kilimanjaro VET project, coordinated by Educational Consortium OSAO (VET), a peer review was conducted in January 2025. The peer review assessed how the project's objectives had been achieved: enhance the pedagogical skills of VET teachers, enable continuous professional development, utilize digital solutions, and foster networking. The peer review, based on EQAVET framework, involved three educational institutions in Tanzania evaluating each other. Key findings include significant progress in implementing competence-based education, effective use of digital tools, and strong local and international networking. Challenges include limited resources and resistance to change. Recommendations emphasize continued evaluation, more training, and enhanced digital infrastructure.