

EUROPE

Ensuring Unity and Respect as Outcomes for People of Europe



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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1 Policy Making

This document is devoted to policy making, formulating a number of recommendations. Given that the EUROPE project delivered well working pilots in different settings (countries, types of schools, etc.), the basic focus of these recommendations is on how these pilots can be scaled-up. This entails a number of feasibility as well as operational considerations.

1.1 *Feasibility and operational considerations*

Apart from the questions of whether the QT/TM programme works and is worth doing, a basic consideration is whether the resources are there to scale the programme up. The resources we should consider are people involved in the scaling-up process and the methodological approach.

Does it work? A first question when considering scaling up is whether the proposed best practice is effective; in our case: does it indeed reduce the risk factors for radicalisation, does it indeed foster an inclusive learning environment, and does it indeed help teachers dealing with diversity? From section 2, supplemented with our own quantitative and qualitative findings presented in section 4, we can indeed conclude that this is the case.

Is it worth doing? Obviously implementing and sustaining a novel approach such as QT/TM, comes with a cost. The question at hand is then whether there is a positive Return on Investment (RoI)? A full cost-benefit analysis is beyond the scope of the EUROPE project. However, figures about the cost of ‘doing nothing’ give a clear indication. For example, the Global Terrorism Index report (IEP, 2017) estimates that the economic impact of terrorism for the period 2014-2016 is between 80 and 100 billion USD per year. It should be noted that these amounts do not even include the indirect costs – estimated in the US to be 0.7 and 1.0 percent of the BNP, nor the cost of human suffering.

Moreover, there is general agreement on the fact that tackling drop-out of students and burn-out of teachers and other well-being factors has a positive RoI. Specific studies on the positive outcomes of QT/TM programme – carried out in collaboration with the University of Connecticut and the University of Pennsylvania, School of Health Economy – show that the benefits to society are quite impressive: approximately \$ 2.5 million for every 100 students participating in a school-wide QT/TM programme. Each additional graduating student¹ results in a net increase of about \$ 170,000 over her/his lifetime (David Lynch Foundation). It should be noted that this study takes into account

¹ Compared to dropouts, high school graduates earn higher wages, live longer, and are more likely to raise healthier, better-educated children. High school graduates are also less likely to commit crimes and rely on government assistance.

more benefits than has been investigated in our research. However, in establishing the RoI of QT/TM one should take into account all costs, but also all benefits.

Policy levels involved. Dealing with educational policies always implies a multi-level governance structure. The single school represents the first level from which we pass to the district level, the regional one, the national level and finally the European one. The different levels have distinct grades of autonomy, sometimes a stronger coordination role, other times they are in charge of setting the rules. In discussing the ten policy recommendations in subsection 5.2, we will distinguish these different levels.

Methodological approach. The scaling-up process is rooted in two interlinked dimensions: deepening and widening. The *deepening* process revolves around improving the QT/TM practice and embedding it in a permanent way. All the schools involved in the pilot have expressed the need to incorporate the QT/TM programme permanently in the school's curriculum. Therefore, the "experiment" carried out must be transformed into a continued practice, and this is also the way to assure a true dimension of sustainability in the process. The *widening* process assumes a scalable dimension from the particular to the general. In our case it means taking measures to grow the number of people being part of the QT/TM programme. This includes more students, more teachers and staff, more schools, and more teacher training centres.

1.2 Recommendations

After having established that the QT/TM programme works and has a positive RoI, this subsection looks at specific recommendations (see figure 6) taking into account the policy making level and exploring the deepening and widening of the practice. At the very core of the recommendations is the well-being of students, teachers, and staff, that is improved thanks to the self-balancing technique of the QT/TM programme.

Recommendation 1: capitalize on a proven approach - *for all policy making levels.* Given that our research confirms and supplements earlier research on different psychological indicators, with positive results for students, teachers, and staff, the practice of QT/TM is recommended for more widespread implementation as a self-balancing prevention strategy to violence and violent radicalization and at the same time as a strength-based approach to inclusive education addressing psychosocial, social and physical challenges to well-being. It is estimated that the implementation of QT/TM yields a Return on Investment of more than 100% (i.e. the benefit is estimated to be at least 2-3 times higher than the cost), taking into account all benefits such as reduced drop-out, health benefits etc. The RoI can be bigger when a region or country implements QT/TM on a bigger scale following economies of scale including more efficient training and follow-up. The feasibility of this first recommendation has been

demonstrated by the various implementations in schools across Europe during the project.

Recommendation 2: promote well-being as a key objective - for regions and countries and Commission. It is recommended to integrate well-being for pupils, teachers, and staff as a key objective in regional, national, and European programmes as a wider home for innovative programmes/successful practices promoting well-being such as the QT/TM programme. For example, while the Commission recognizes well-being as an education objective, higher priority is given to the challenge of economic growth and the shrinking workforce (European Commission, 2012). However, there is now wide agreement that well-being plays an essential role in addressing these socio-economic challenges not in the least by combatting social exclusion and early school leaving. In addition, almost always, achieving cognitive, interactive and physical skills requires a learning process which is grounded on basic well-being. Finally, in the light of the alarming recent deterioration of well-being of the young internet generation – in terms of inter alia depression and suicide -, it is even more important to consider well-being as a key objective in regional, national, and European programmes.

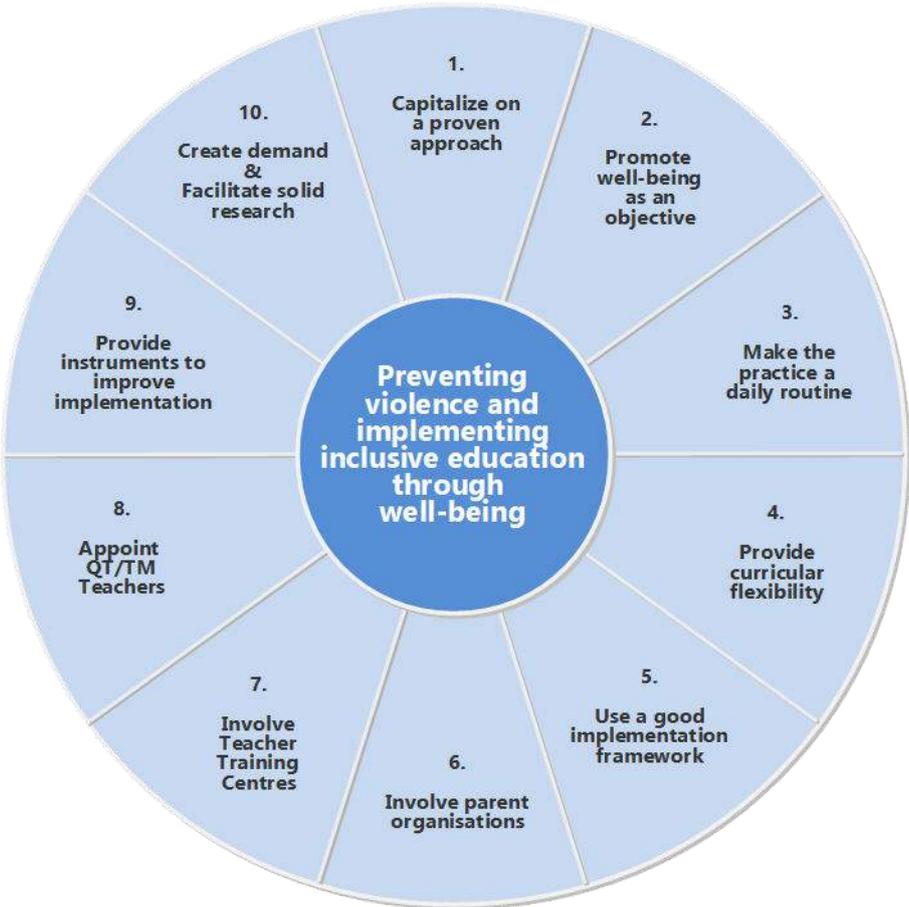


Figure 6: Overview of the key objectives and recommendations

Recommendation 3: make the practice a daily routine - *for schools.*

Sustained results only come with sustained practice. Sustained practice of QT/TM can only be successful through its institutionalization in the regular daily curriculum in the school that is implementing it. As an analogy we can compare a well-being technique such as QT/TM with fitness exercises: while the exercise is easy to learn, one only stays fit when doing the exercise regularly. Likewise, QT/TM is like fitness for the mind, bringing balance to mind, body, and behaviour. Therefore, it is recommended to include well-being programmes such as QT/TM (and by extension any well-being technique) as part of the daily schedule for pupils, e.g. by dedicating a specific time of the day, and by providing permanent support by dedicated teachers. This recommendation has been confirmed by our findings showing that students that were more regular in their practice have significantly better results in the psychological tests.

Recommendation 4: provide curricular flexibility - *for regions and countries.* In a number of countries, schools don't have the authority to embed well-being techniques such as QT/TM in the school curriculum activities and having QT/TM separate from the curriculum makes the programme less effective. It is recommended to regional and national MoEs to make a difference here. An example from the EUROPE project is where the schools in Portugal could make use of a new law, regarding Autonomy and Curricular Flexibility, providing schools with the necessary conditions to manage the curriculum while also integrating practices that promote better learning and allowing schools to get approval for special projects including QT/TM.

Recommendation 5: use a good implementation framework - *for all policy making levels.* It is recommended to use a good implementation framework when introducing QT/TM in the school or region or country wide. An excellent Implementation Framework has been used and tested in the EUROPE project at the level of the school. It could be extended with elements of other implementation frameworks such as the Quality Implementation Framework of Durlak and Duprez (2008). The latter framework in itself contains a number of more detailed recommendations, such as the use of professional QT/TM experts and the use of pilot studies in order to identify and be able to act on local barriers and enablers, etc.

Recommendation 6: involve parents organisations - *for the local level.* While the involvement of parents is essential in a whole-school approach such as the QT/TM, parents are often organised in parent organisations that can be very instrumental. It is therefore recommended to work with these parent organisations for the implementation of QT/TM in a school. For example, the EUROPE project worked with one parent association that, because of the success of the QT/TM programme, was subsequently instrumental in contacting other parent associations and youth institutions.

Recommendation 7: involve Teacher Training Centres - *for regions and countries or more specifically Teacher Training Centres.* It is recommended to

integrate QT/TM in teacher training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as an instrument to support teachers in the challenge of coping with the increasing diversity of the learning environment. There are different reasons for teachers to participate in the QT/TM programme, including creating a more caring environment, improving students-teachers relationship and teachers' ability to cope with difficult situations, promoting tolerance, increasing teachers' overall well-being, etc, but certainly it would be odd if the students were practising a technique which the teachers had not experienced for themselves. That this recommendation is doable has been demonstrated in the EUROPE project where three teacher training centres in Portugal were offering QT/TM as a course for which teachers could get credits as CPD. The results were very positive raising interest of 90 other teacher training centres. Teacher Training Centres could eventually offer courses to become QT/TM experts.

Recommendation 8: appoint QT/TM teachers - *for regional and national educational authorities.* It is recommended to appoint QT/TM teachers in every school that implements QT/TM with the objective of making the practice of QT/TM part of the daily routine of the school. This role may be filled by a specific teacher of QT/TM, or also by regular teachers (maths, history, art, language) or pedagogical counsellors etc., who have taken the training to become QT/TM teachers, and who offer the program as part of their regular activity at the school. Ideally such "tenure" QT/TM teachers are part of a school's well-being objectives. Training to become a specialist teacher of QT/TM could be offered as an elective credit course in teacher training centres.

Recommendation 9: provide instruments to improve implementation - *for regional and national educational authorities.* It is recommended to provide or facilitate instruments to improve the implementation and the practice in schools of proven approaches such as QT/TM. This can be done through proper networking or ideally a self-sustained community of practice. In the EUROPE project we have seen that at the school level, principals appreciate the possibility of exchanging experiences, even cross-border, or cross-language. There is also a need for school teachers who are supervising the QT/TM practice to be able to exchange experiences with colleagues. Another example is the sharing of evaluations, such as the one by Ofsted, the independent school watchdog in the UK, where a QT/TM school was judged 'outstanding' for Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare. But equally at an interregional or international level, it is worthwhile to exchange practices, in this case primarily in policy making, such as the MoE in Portugal giving, under certain conditions, freedom to schools to integrate programs such as QT/TM in the curriculum, or the possibility to gain CPD credits for QT/TM in teacher training centres.

An important instrument for networking is the establishment of a (European) expert centre for the implementation of the QT/TM programme, as was done in Portugal for the EUROPE project. Such an expert centre can provide expertise on the implementation of QT/TM in schools and teacher Training Centres and can also provide assistance to policy makers as well.

Recommendation 10: create demand & facilitate solid research - *for the regional and national level and the Commission.* For scaling up the QT/TM approach, awareness-raising and take-up actions are one of the first things that come to mind and several instruments such as publications and educational conferences are well known. In addition, MoE and the Commission can take very practical measures for take-up. For example, the willingness of schools to experiment with the QT/TM programme can be stimulated by including in the calls for project proposals approaches that prevent violence and promote inclusive learning and well-being and that accept novel approaches such as QT/TM. A good example is the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission, where the EUROPE project and the FRIENDS project were funded.

Another important element in creating demand is to provide solid evidence that a novel approach such as QT/TM works. However, doing solid research on novel approaches in education (e.g. with an RCT) is hard. In order to get research to another level in terms of quality and frequency, the Commission and MoE could consider differentiating funding schemes and provide extra funding for projects that commit to higher quality research. Our experience in the EUROPE project is that designing an RCT for students is very difficult, and biases are very difficult to avoid. Therefore, it is also recommended to do multiple trials in order to create a larger body of evidence, such that studies with the strongest evidence (i.e. least bias) can be selected, and the possible variance in results can be better understood.

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