

Teréz Kleisz

## LEARNING REGIONS AND QUALITY DEVELOPMENT – INTRODUCTION TO R3L+ PROJECT FUNDED BY EU LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME (2009–2011)\*

The project has been addressing the issue of promoting quality within the cross-sector and interorganisational networks of stakeholders committed to stimulating adult learning by reflecting the good practice to be found in the experience of Learning City–Learning Region initiatives.

In our today's world the discourse on quality or quality systems has grown enormously, the field of education and learning are no exceptions. Over the last decade sophisticated quality frameworks were produced in the area of vocational learning and higher education (CQAF, ENQA-VET, EQARF).

Some practitioners view this new trend with caution and suspicion having identified quality frameworks more of a controlling tool than a supportive one that through provoking reflection may engage people and organizations involved in the process of continuous quality improvement as a consequence. Our aim was to contribute to the last orientation, e.g. avoid being a burden and creating resistance but rather triggering personal and social development and enhancing quality.

Based on earlier achievements on quality criteria and indicative descriptors a framework was developed by the project partners trying to capture the richness of collaborative learning in order to provide common principles and useful points of reference for those interested in building or maintaining learning partnership in the context of learning cities and learning regions.

The concept of *learning regions* refers to localities (smaller and bigger entities, cities and regions) fostering an approach which places people as their resource and learning practices at the heart of community planning seeking benefits in greater quality of life, dynamic local economy and increased social cohesion.

Due to the different departures and pathways each of them has developed domain-specific knowledge, in the field of social capital building, as regards good governance and institution building, stakeholder collaboration, public–private partnerships and transversal cooperation.

The basic intention of the R3L+ project was to capitalize on the diversity of experiences by bringing together actors from several EU countries in order to learn from each other and jointly designing a common quality framework for the development and management of cooperative learning. We started with a 3 'P' model (*Partnerships–Participation–Progress and renewal*), but later another module was added: *Learning Culture*.

A simple and usable format was created such as the following:

1. *Core quality criteria (the 3 Ps and Learning Culture)*  
(Main aspects important for quality assurance in the case of a specific quality area)
2. *Quality indicators* (core and additional descriptors); What might indicate quality within the partnership?

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\*<http://www.learning-regions.net>



3. *Evidence to support indicators* (What evidence is available to support the inclusion of the indicators?)

4. *Concrete example drawn from case study analysis*

An example:

*Core quality criteria:* Learning Culture

Learning objectives/outcomes are commonly defined and promoted within the partnership.

*Quality indicator:* Targets and benchmarks are discussed, defined and used by the learning region partnership

*Evidence to support indicator:* Development of charters, learning contracts or agreements, use in the overall strategic documents of targets and specific benchmarks. Review of regular reports including data (qualitative and quantitative) on learning objectives and outcomes

*Concrete examples drawn from case study analysis:* Links to good practice

Planned outcomes include: a quality framework covering background report on the issue of quality in learning cities and regions; quality criteria and indicators, a quality cycle describing the implementation of the R3L+ instruments within a learning approach, a quality handbook for planners and managers of learning cities and regions and a training module for key actors of Learning cities and regions.

**Project partners:**

Ludwig Maximilian Universität, München, Germany – project coordinator

P&W Praxis und Wissenschaft projekt GmbH, Ingolstadt Research Centre, Germany – partner

LRD Munich, non-profit agency, Germany – partner

University of Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom – partner

City Conersity AB, Lund KKV, Sweden – partner

Kauno Technologijo Universitetas, Kaunas, Lithuania – partner

Observator pentru Dezvoltarea Invatarii Permanente ODIP (Observatory for Lifelong Learning Development), NGO, Bucuresti, Romania – partner

Nexus Europe Ltd., Dublin Research Center, Ireland – partner

University of Pécs, Pécs, Hungary – partner