

Short summary of main points of discussion of the
Cologne Seminar
7th to 9th of March

General

1. In all workshops we had the chance to learn from each other, to get ideas for innovation and for creative solutions. We could check our positions and the quality of our measures.
2. All topics of the working groups are worth to be discussed on conferences in the future in an European context. It might be helpful to know the state of the art in quality management, in counselling and guidance, in e-learning and so on. This could be the start for European wide solutions.
3. It seems to be possible to integrate national strategies in quality assurance, in interlocking of educational domains and so on to develop a common strategy, to coordinate the national policies and to save money, time and energy. It is not so effective to initiate many isolated measures, the better way is probably to implement a coherent system of measures.
4. In working group 6 Mikael Andersson said: "We don't need more interactivity, but more interaction". The possibilities of electronic media are helpful for many activities and purposes in the field of lifelong learning, but they are not a substitute for a face-to-face-communication. This is right p.e. for counselling, for networking, for working with SME.
5. There is a need for a long-term preventative view. This point of view is obviously right with regard to all topics, but often in conflict with financing conditions, with political decisions and with the intentions of the network actors. It might be helpful that the EU Commission builds a framework for continuous support of learning regions.
6. In the past many efforts were made to compensate lacks in education for special disadvantaged groups. Actually it seems to be necessary to support high potentials. They are guarantees for further development, growth and innovation.
7. The commitment by SMEs to the training of its employees is considered as a key element. SMEs are necessary as a network-partner, they are interesting learning places, they can buy counselling services, but they can hardly be recruited. Good practice shows ways of successful recruitment: involving the SME-associations and the Chambers, being sensitive for the special needs of SMEs, offering services , which strengthen the economic position of such enterprises.
8. Initial and further counselling is the key for lifelong learning. And counselling is an important element too in making learning visible, in reflecting, in documenting and in recognizing competencies. Informally acquired competencies are a topic for SMEs too, as the Norwegian example shows. And this issue generates new tasks for quality management and for the cooperation between different parts of the education system.

9. Quality assurance is not only a matter of seminars and schools, but of data bases, of counselling processes and of networking too. It might be helpful to initiate a process of finding criteria for evaluation in Europe.
10. In the context of counselling, quality management, new learning worlds and networking special knowledge and special abilities are necessary. This additional know how could be attained by special trainings of teachers or by creating new professions. In any case it would be fruitful to organise the process of qualification on an European level.
11. The success factors for networks are
 - good experience with each other, which is relevant for development of confidence
 - common tasks which allow all networkers a win-win-situation
 - an efficient structure with clear roles and responsibilities and charismatic leaders
 - and last but not least individual mutual understanding (Chemistry between the actors have to be in a balance, to work successfully.)
12. There is a paradox about learning regions: On the one hand the competition among them is increasing, on the other hand general standards should be implemented to make national and international benchmarking possible.

Working Groups

Education counselling (Working Group I)

Key Issues:

General

- Cooperation and Competition > if the counselling should be effective than it is cooperative therefore there should be structures to support cooperation not competition
- Everyday counselling AND more general counselling (resp for social groups, not provider)
- Life Wide Learning (cooperation in themes of life)

Training of the staff

- Engagement of clients - Competence of the people who will engage the clients "Train the trainers"
- Customer oriented environment plus a quality training for the counsellors
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Quality perspective

- Professional training standards / Quality standards of networks / Standards of individual partners / Technical standards (transparency) / Transparency of the market of the region
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Principles of guidance

- Independency of the counselling institution (how to guarantee > by the principles, core of action, ethic habit, regardless of the location, bound or not bound to an institution)
- Is a set of principles for the institution or for the individual counsellor > both, principles for the institution and ethics for the individual
- First more general guidance service and then more specialised by a single institution offering the service

Permeability of educational domains (Working Group II)

Key issues:

Governance

- Permeability works on a horizontal and a vertical level.
- Permeability relies on internal cooperation between the ministries.
- There is a need to integrate procedures.
- There is a need for juridical changes.
- Permeability requires a reform of public administration – it can only be made a reality when structures are changes (this must be taken into account when launching new programmes)
- Relative autonomy must be led by the regions.
- Learning Regions are a paradox in so far as they are aiming to strengthen the individual responsibilities and at the same time aiming to strengthen the regional (municipalities) responsibilities (against and in line with national policies)

Knowledge

- There is a need for better knowledge management and transfer of between think tanks, policy makers and the regions.
- Permeability provides chances to establish quality and to lower cost.

Networks as a tool

- For Permeability building there is a need to integrate services: Integration of Learning structures in all-inclusive services should be made.

Quality in Education (Working Group III)

Key Issues:

General

The workshop brought forward that there exists a variety of tools to measure and control quality standards in different national settings and on different levels within organisations and training providers. When talking about quality in education it has to be made clear which area one is talking about. Although there are various tools of quality measurement there are common objectives of quality standards: one principle goal of quality assurance is to give access to qualified education.

- Due to external pressure there is a need to foster quality management
- Networking and cooperation work are a prerequisite for new models of quality development and assurance
- initial public funding and its involved report duties help collective change projects to stay on

- track
- the workshop brought forward the differences of a top-down-model in UK and a regional bottom-up-model in Hamburg, Germany
 - the participants voted for a European Foundation for “Quality in Education”

Quality development for training providers (bottom-up-model on a voluntarily basis)

Tools

How to improve quality for training providers: through *quality development*

- Continuous quality assurance for training providers through regional networking:
- First step finding appropriate partners for a regional network for quality development, second step sending out a questionnaire asking the participants how they would ensure quality, third step comparing the results, fourth step exchanging good practice, fifth step implementing and controlling the processes and instruments.

Problems:

- a closed group of partners is needed
- a long-term commitment is needed
- written legal contract
- work on different levels of organisations (measures, address of specific target groups etc.)
- a guarding organisation must be chosen
- commitment and interest of senior managers has to be continuously renewed
- positive outcome of the project has to be continuously proven

Quality in the industrial sector

Problems

- quality assurance in educational programmes in the **industrial sector**: Educational programmes set up and supported through the industry are difficult to evaluate as it is the companies right to set the criteria of quality for their specific needs. (There are in some countries agreed standards in the field of secondary education like in Germany the Dual System/Certificate of the Chamber of Commerce etc.)

Certification

The problem of certification was not addressed in necessary length due to lack of time. Undoubtedly it needs more consideration.

Benchmarking

Benchmarks of quality development are needed as a next step

Top-down or bottom-up

Advantages and disadvantages of both strategies were discussed

It was agreed that the top-down-strategy bears some dangers, because national target not exactly match with the learners needs; it needs to be highly inclusive and have an explicit link to funding; bureaucracy

However, governments take a strategic role

Further Points

The UNESCO has set a range of criteria for the quality in education in general (like “Detecting error and illusions”, “Principles of pertinent knowledge”, “Understanding each other”).

New Learning Worlds (Working Group 4)

Key Issues:

General

What do “the new learning worlds” look like?

The demands of LLL implicate the invention of new forms and a change of quality in learning and teaching. Considering contemporary psychological research the aims of preparing for LLL can be reached learning environments that

- Activate the learner,
- Are Problem orientated,
- Offer multiple ways to work with,
- Offer a wide range of solutions if possible,

This may lead to “intelligente knowledge” and metacognitive improvement that improves learning skills.

E-Learning is one important instrument to make this approaches possible. Electronic learning environments should also be constructed as modularized service model, that can be adopted to the individual learning preferences and needs.

How could the new learning worlds become reality?

Faster success may be attained by implementing the new learning principles in the existing education organisations and systems rather than building up new structures.

The idea of Lifelong Learning and appropriate learning methods have to be “sold” – to the politics as well as to the teachers and trainers and to the general public. Education marketing has to be made for the necessary *change management* on every level:

- Faster cooperation between systems of education and employment
- Support for transfer by identification and mediation of good practice
- Support and training for the trainers and teachers in service
- Marketing for a change of mentalities, public awareness for the benefit of LLL.

Integration of SMEs (Working Group 5)

Key Issues:

Questions

- How did you find the network partners? We were permanently member of the meetings of SMEs and the representing institutions (Chambers, etc.), In our experience you don’t need many companies (minimum 3 but not more than 12). You just have to point out the benefit of cooperation for all partners in small steps.
- Which were the weak points in the cooperation? People had problems changing their point of view: The first aim is to do the best for the own enterprise, the second aim is to do the best for the network. They just had to detach from their first priority. Another problem is that the companies have so many economical problems. They don’t have any time and the spirit to come together. Only the “better” SMEs come together in a network, the weak enterprises stay alone.
- How did you integrate the SMEs in your competence –validation? SMEs were integrated by creating special methods for them, by involving them in the planing etc.
- Which methods of analysis did you use to get information about the learning needs? We used questionnaires, we made interviews, etc.

- How could you motivate banks to participate? They are part of the board of directors and they are interested in innovations.
- What were the problems? The biggest problem was to point out, what we want to do, that means what are our aims! When we started talking with the SMEs we did not yet have made the interviews, in which we tried to find out, which seminar they needed. Later on it was no longer a problem proposing contents for the seminars and workshops.

Methods of analysis of learning-needs (more scientific)

Norway: Job descriptions help to find out the competences and the lacks.

Spain: Sector studies, questionnaires.

Successful forms of regional cooperation

- Cooperation with many little companies, cooperation with associations, SME-clusters and SME-networks.
- Networking is not always the right mean; it depends on the aims.
- Competition may be a reason not to cooperate.
- The Training market is full of companies. The training-providers have to find advantages for these actions.
- Strategy should be changed – we should try to give the SMEs the impression, that they are making a good work and not to focus all the problems. Good strategies already developed should be transferred.

Developing Networks (Working Group 6)

Key Issues:

General

Networks that try to foster processes of lifelong learning on the regional level face one central challenge: The challenge of developing networks is *to turn innovative networks into sustainable structures* that deliver support for the individual to manage its efforts of lifelong learning. This support may consist of counselling, transparency, and offers of learning that meet the individual demand.

The development of networks towards this goal can be characterised by dichotomies that have to be handled in an intelligent way. These dichotomies of developing networks are:

- bottom-up vs. top-down governance
- Efficiency of processes vs. flexibility and innovativeness
- openness for themes and actors vs. closure in order to reach goals
- centrality vs. de-centrality
- dependence on persons vs. institutionalisation

Sustainable Networks

Furthermore, the implementation of sustainable network structures on the regional can only be successful, if

1. political support on the regional level is ensured
2. enterprises, especially SMEs are included in the network
3. concrete interests of the actors are tackled. This means that the actors have to work together actively on concrete, goal-oriented projects.
4. the actors of the network have common experiences of success in past co-operations

Policy implications

regional models and strategies are difficult to be put together to national regulations

lifelong learning requires closer co-operation between national ministries of economy, industry, and education