

# Towards Maximising the Quality of Social Impact through Valorisation of LLPs

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## Abstract

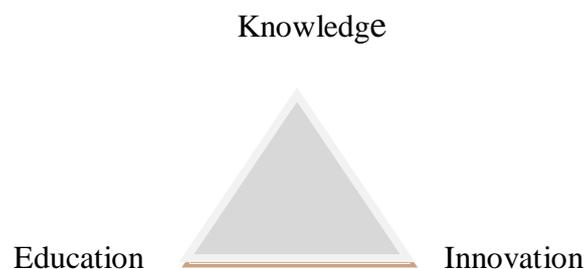
The European Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) initiative aims for social cohesion and improvement of opportunities for mobility, employability and progress across all European Union (EU) countries. By improving the competencies, skills and knowledge people are enabled to participate fully in society. The EU supports a large number of actions and LLP projects in an effort to implement the European strategy for education. However, there is often considerable overlap between projects and minimal valorisation, which is wasteful. In this paper, we present interim deliverables including learning skills of the VALO project, which aims to develop expertise in valorisation (dissemination, sustainability and exploitation). We conclude by proposing lines of further research and development such as the inclusion of valorisation into Quality Process Modes for maximising the social impact of LLPs.

## 1 Introduction

In total 9,1 % of the population in the 27 European Countries (EU27) aged 25 to 64 participated in 2010 in LLP education and training. In the five years from 2007-2011 for example the European Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) Programme has provided EUR 1.27 billion in grants [1]. According to the EU support for vocational education and training 2007-2011 [2] *‘around 10 % of European adults are currently unemployed, a figure rising to 20 % amongst young people. Meanwhile, around 76 million 25-64-year-olds have low or no qualifications’*. This shows that there is a pressing need for

professional updating regarding skills, competencies and qualifications, particularly in new technologies.

The September 2020 Strategic vision of Europe is based on the belief that the role and quality of education facilitates sustainable development for a rapidly changing world. There is a realisation that the knowledge triangle (Fig. 1) of Innovation, Education, and Knowledge need to promote a creative, innovative and entrepreneurial mindset among pupils, trainees, students, teachers and researchers for a more dynamic European labour market and a higher skilled workforce [3]. Education and education systems are very large and very complex. The fact that the outputs of the system are intangible and very long term coupled with the need to satisfy the requirements of a diverse set of stakeholders make these systems very expensive and difficult to manage. The stakeholders include students, teachers, support services, industry, community, government and society at large. Often the requirements are in conflict and dichotomies between productivity and quality mirror the same dichotomies experienced by other systems including information systems. Together they are referred to as the “*knowledge triangle*” [4].



**Fig 1. The Knowledge Triangle**

A fully functioning triangle of knowledge (Fig. 1) maximises the quality of systems and also ensures social cohesion. Education needs to provide challenging academic programmes underpinned by innovative research and scholarship as well as professional practice. Knowledge is thus generated through the integration of theory and practice.

Co-operation and communication between Innovation, Knowledge and Education are fundamental for local, domain specific, national and international level developments. Progress in society demands strong but balanced emphasis on all three. Education and Educational Institutions are the cradle of knowledge creation. Innovations are mainly born through both practice and generation of ideas.

The European LdV programme builds synergies between training institutions, public authorities, industry sectors as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from all over Europe [3]. Knowledge sharing, and sharing of good practice as well as creation and adoption of new methods and products facilitates integration, mobility of experts and expertise and creates the pre-requisites of social cohesion. In turn social gain and positive social impact are achieved.

## **2 Need for Valorisation**

All projects including all LLPs need to disseminate and exploit their results and outputs for maximising the achievements of the project and increasing sustainability beyond the lifetime of their development. However, the outcomes and outputs are often forgotten or poorly disseminated and exploited once the projects are completed. Dissemination means spreading information to ensure that others benefit from experiences gained in the project. Exploitation of the results of project activities means that more people can share in the successes, experiences and lessons learned. The French term **valorisation** is often used encompassing all activities that maximise the achievements of a project. This includes transfer of project results and best practices to different and broader contexts; potential tailoring to the needs of others; continuation after the funding period has finished; influences on policy and practice. The emphasis is on optimising the value of the project for diverse stakeholders (society, community, institutions, and individuals) and boosting its impact. The focus of the project is on the sustainability of the results.

Many European and other projects are missing a good dissemination and valorisation strategy. Projects usually are carried out in isolation, and finish without essential impact. They may be well managed, provide good results and products and are highly useful for the development of different institutions but unfortunately only few projects are valorised in well-managed and sustainable ways. This results in the unsatisfying situation, that many good products and project's results are not further used, because the target groups have neither been informed nor involved throughout the project duration. In particular projects consisting of purely research oriented and/or technically oriented partners seem to lack knowledge of the importance of dissemination, exploitation and valorisation for sustainable development. They also lack skills for carrying out actions of dissemination and valorisation.

### **3.1 The VALO Project**

In order to support projects to build competences in valorisation of results a new valorisation competence is currently developed within the frame of the European Certification and Qualification Association ([www.ECQA.org](http://www.ECQA.org)). The ECQA Valorisation Expert Training and Certification (VALO) two year project started in October 2011 with funding from the EU Lifelong Learning Programme [5]. The project aims at developing a new skill set and a job role qualification study program, where competencies in valorisation are customised for the European industry into an online study program complemented with an on-line examination and certification training and certification schema for Valorisation experts. A pilot training will take place in the participating organisations/member states (Austria, Finland, Greece, Ireland and the UK) and the study programme will be refined and improved based on systematic feedback. The training material is modular, consisting of four Units (U), and 3-6 Elements (E) per unit. Every element consists of 3-6 performance criteria in line with the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

The four units are:

VAL.U1 Understanding the importance concerning valorisation of innovation and EU project results

VAL.U2 Dissemination (broad and deep dissemination)

VAL.U3 Exploitation

VAL.U4 Valorisation Methods

In the first unit (VAL.U1) terms such as broad and deep dissemination, exploitation, sustainability, value creation and mainstreaming are discussed. The student also get to know the meaning of innovation, the process of innovation and how innovations can be used as a tool for continuous improvement and sustainable development.

The second unit (VAL.U2) addresses the issues of Broad dissemination (strategies for creating a critical mass of awareness and interests) and deep dissemination (builds on the created interests and deepens the dissemination towards specific target groups). The combination of both leads to (1) a large community knowing about the project/innovation and (2) specific groups who are really interested in using / buying the products of the project.

The third unit (VAL. U3.) addresses issues regarding value creation and what value is actually being delivered to stakeholders and the gap between what is being delivered and what is expected and needed. A situation-centric notion of value regarding relative importance to different stakeholders is analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

In the fourth unit (VAL.U4) relevant existing valorisation methods are discussed in order to increase reach of the gained results of a certain project. Theoretical as well as practical knowledge regarding diffusion, communication to potential stakeholders, valorisation channels (formal and informal), valorisation tools and intellectual property rights is provided and practiced with hands-on exercises.

The VALO project aims to support students in the successful application of valorisation methods which are anticipated to enhance the success rate of conducted (European) projects.

Course material will be developed in order to produce units of learning outcomes dealing with international working skills and integrated in ECQA. The current platform of ECQA where a cluster of LLP and industry training programs formed a joined certification body with European test question pool, European exam portals, and defined certification processes, will be enriched with a further valorisation expert skill. The ECQA is the result of a number of EU supported initiatives in the last ten years where in the EU LLP different educational developments decided to follow a joint process for the certification of persons in the industry. Through the ECQA it becomes possible to attend courses for a specific profession in one country and perform a Europe-wide agreed examination at the end of the course. The certificate will be recognized by European training organizations and institutions in more than 18 member countries. This will automatically lead to higher recognition of the certificate and higher chances of working in an open European market.

#### **4. Enhancing Quality through Planning for Valorisation**

From the time of Aristotle (c.300 BC) it was recognised that planning and quality must be built in the original design and not 'remembered' as an afterthought. In Information Systems development for example the industry operated largely with corrective methods of error detection and correction rather than prevention [6, 7]. When developing a project proposal planning, normally dividing the work into Work Packages and/or Activities is essential. In addition, success indicators and risk identification are included as well as financial matters and allocation of tasks to specific partners and/or individuals. Activities include those that will take place during the implementation of the project but also beyond the completion of the project. Sustainability and exploitation of the results/outputs complete the plan.

In the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach Deming [8] emphasises management responsibility and the intrinsic link between leadership and the quality of processes, which in turn should lead to quality in products and services. In 1950s he asserted that “*Quality can be defined only in terms of the agent*”. He clarifies that the challenge of defining quality is to translate the future need of the user into measurable characteristics, so that a product (or service) can be designed and produced to give satisfaction at a price that the user will pay.

To understand the needs of the user and in particular the future needs, seems to be an important challenge we must not neglect. By increasing sustainability of LLPs we propose that valorisation should be included as a separate process into the Quality Management Process Model. By planning the valorisation strategy in a systematic manner at an early stage and by using the Deming PCDA cycle for continuous improvement of the valorisation process maximised social impact will be reached.

A project will no longer be carried out in isolation; its results and best practices will be transferred to different and broader contexts and sustainability as well as exploitation will enable continuation of the aims and objectives after the funding period has finished. Also the project results may be tailored to the needs of others and influences on policy and practice will bring maximised social impact.

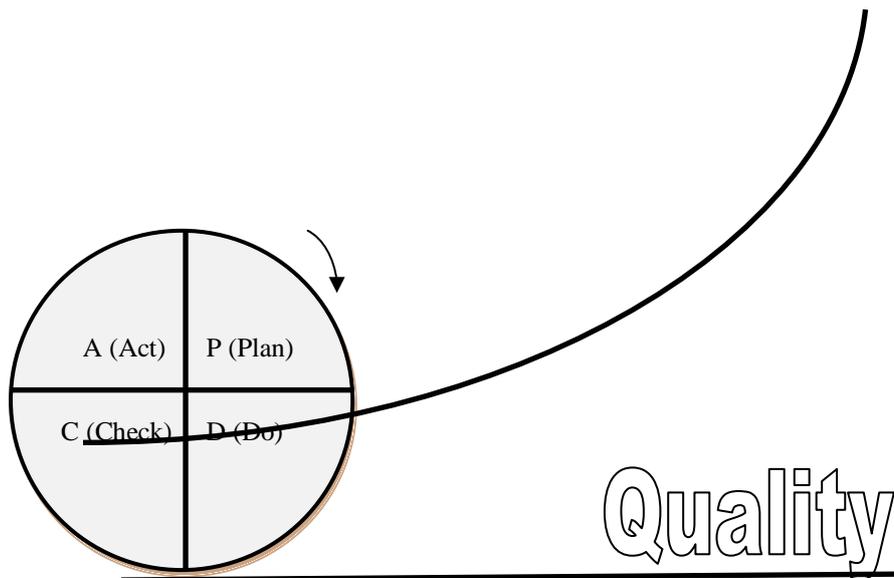
Fig. 2 shows how the original Deming PDCA Cycle, a four-step model for carrying out change, just as a circle has no end, and by repeating the steps (plan-do-check-act) again and again for continuous improvement, quality (and maturity) will raise whilst the circle is climbing towards excellence.

**Plan:** Establish policy, objectives, processes and procedures for managing risk, dissemination and exploitation in with the priorities (national, regional, thematic of the funding body).

**Do:** Implement and operate the policy, controls, processes and procedures.

**Check:** Assess and, measure process performance against policy, expectations, objectives and practical experience and report the results to management for review.

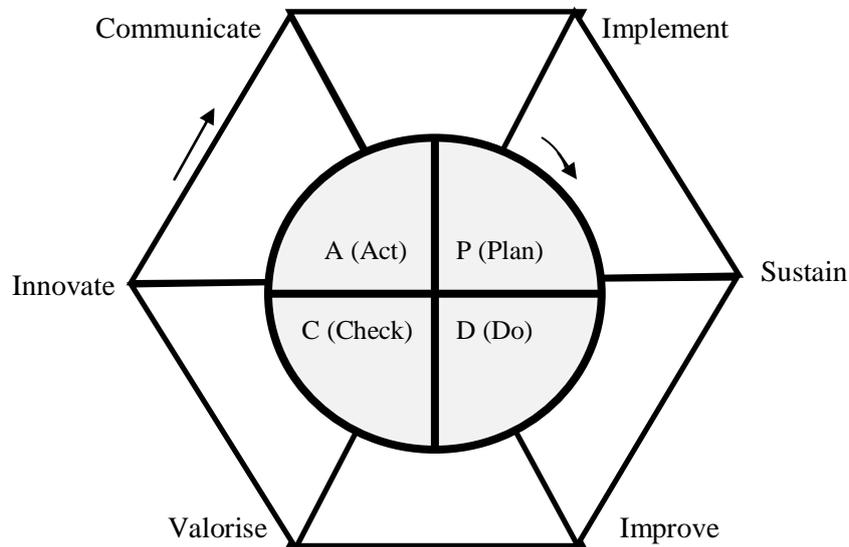
**Act:** Maintain and improve. Take corrective and preventive actions, based on the results of the internal/self assessment and management review or other relevant information, to achieve continuous improvement.



**Fig.2. Deming (PCDA) Cycle adapted from [8]**

#### **4 Need for a Quality Process Model for continuous improvement in valorisation**

We propose to embed the PCDA Cycle in a new process quality model in an effort to identify, plan, monitor, evaluate, improve and manage the valorisation project. The intended model is depicted in Fig. 3. and shows two cycles which interact at every stage, delivering outputs incrementally.



**Fig. 3 – The InCISIV Quality Process Model**

The main emphasis is on planning the quality strategy allowing for agility and repeated reviewing of the project progress and quality of deliverables. The interlocking of the PCDA processes as well as all the processes shown in the outer hexagon will also result in maturity growth, improved quality of the deliverables and their impact. The maturity growth will facilitate communication and knowledge sharing [9]. By incorporating planning and review (Check) throughout the whole project the quality of the process and the products is enhanced. By incorporating explicit requirements for sustainability the stakeholders will be satisfied. Dissemination and exploitation are embedded in valorisation and hence the social impact can not only be estimated but also targeted for tangible and positive gains.

## **5 Conclusion**

By bringing together different organisations from different countries they facilitate mutual inspiration, exploit existing experiences, concepts, good practices or innovations and open a European perspective and policy orientation to participating institutions. Project partners work on issues such as quality assurance, transparency and the recognition of qualifications and national qualification frameworks. Transfer of Innovation (TOI) projects may also adapt vocational programmes to national and sector labour market needs and integrate vulnerable groups into the labour market. Attractive, international vocational programmes help to keep young people in education or training, motivate them to complete upper secondary education, and in the long run lead to a better skilled workforce, and thus maximise social impact. However, many European and other projects are missing a good valorisation strategy. Projects are carried out in isolation, and finish without essential impact. The project partners usually also lack skills for carrying out actions of dissemination and valorisation.

Due to the fact that valorisation is of utmost importance for maximising impact and increasing sustainability beyond the lifetime of the project we propose that valorisation should be included into the Quality Management Process Model already during the planning process of a project in general and of LLPs in particular. By planning the valorisation strategy in a systematic manner at an early stage and by using the Deming PCDA cycle a continuous improvement of the valorisation process is anticipated and only then we can talk about maximising the social impact of LLPs.

Future work will involve the development of a detailed Quality Plan and identification of Key Performance Indicators, Impact Estimation and Empirical Measures which can be validated through their application initially to the VALO project but also to other EU and Information Systems projects.

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