

Lifelong learning in the Göteborg Region - a unique interaction

Lifelong learning

– a regional success factor, an example of cross-border cooperation

Nowhere else in the educational field in Sweden has such progress been made in regional cooperation as in the 13 member municipalities of the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR).

It is not just a matter of municipalities in collaboration, where Business Region (BRG) and GR are important forces, but also an interaction with industry and commerce, Göteborg University and Chalmers University of Technology.

This attitude is based on the insight that the allocation of resources to lifelong learning is one of the most important success factors for a region. Regions that have a well educated population are attractive. They attract investments, grow and develop, which is completely central to the creation of sustainable welfare. Investments in lifelong learning are qualified and costly. Regional collaboration in the educational systems contributes towards higher quality at a lower cost.

The cooperation is thus based on giving private individuals better prospects and the region's stakeholders manifest added value. Today it covers all school forms – from pre-school to adult education.

GR's vision

– the student at the centre

GR's vision is for the student's needs and wishes to be put in first place.

It is a matter of stimulating educational development and making all kinds of educational courses as accessible as possible.

With this vision in mind, GR's politicians have marked out the path, emphasised lifelong learning as a priority area and encouraged increasingly intensive collaboration among GR's 13 member municipalities, which is what this information sheet is about. Cooperation that among many other things has had the following results:

- That the over 40,000 upper secondary school pupils of the Göteborg region can choose between about 60 schools and over 400 course programmes.
- That close on 20,000 teachers, leaders and other staff participate in Pedagogiskt Centrum's drive for competence enhancement for gainfully employed people.
- That over 550 schools have their supply of textbooks and teaching aids provided for and owing to this collaboration save an estimated 15 MSEK annually. In addition to this, the pupils get "Green Teaching Material" since the amount of traffic in connection with distribution has been reduced by 80 per cent.
- That the web site www.praktikplatsen.se offers over 5,000 trainee workplaces for about 10,000 pupils.
- That all GR's web sites for lifelong learning have over 500,000 visits annually.

"Those who study should have great freedom to develop their knowledge and insight in exciting learning environments of good standard, without regard to limitations of, for instance, a geographical, administrative, social or cultural nature."

The regional policy education goals of the Education Group.

The three cornerstones of regional cooperation

GR – an arena for joint use. The region as a whole constitutes a greater basis than each individual municipality for the provision of breadth, depth and quality in various forms of service to the region's schools. At GR, regional co-use of resources is pursued in a number of areas.

GR – a forum for the exchange of knowledge, ideas and experience. Cutting edge skills and good examples in individual municipalities can be spread to the other member municipalities by regional cooperation. Several networks with leading representatives in the field of education meet regularly at GR

for the exchange of knowledge, ideas and experience. They run joint projects and collaborate with a large number of organisations outside the municipal sphere.

GR – a platform for joint action. The region's combined weight has a greater impact on the world outside in matters of education, where the municipalities have common interests to safeguard, than what they would be able to achieve through individual action.

Rapid development in the past 10 years

The expansion of regional cooperation has occurred rapidly. This can be explained by the great interest in children's, young people's and adults' learning. The realisation that favourable conditions for learning are closely linked to a country's and a region's welfare development contributes of course to this great interest.

The great changes now taking place in the field of education will result in a greater than ever need for regional collaboration and exchange of ideas and experience.

There are great demands for renewal, greater efficiency and improvements in quality in the education systems. Against this background, regional collaboration and inter-municipal cooperation in the school and education area are powerful tools. This has led GR's 13 member municipalities to cooperate in all school forms where the municipality has responsibility. In several cases it is a question of more general contractual collaboration, in other cases of specific agreements with regard to such things as pricing, common routines and the like.

Consensus GR and the Västra Götaland Region

In both the Education Group's regional policy education goals and in the Västra Götaland Region's proposal for a regional development vision, "The good life", the importance of investments in lifelong learning is emphasised. GR, BRG and the Västra Götaland Region have the same view of the value of a vigorous educational landscape that is foremost in competence and knowledge enhancement, mainly because of the great challenges faced by the Göteborg region, the Västra Götaland Region and the country as a whole.

Competition is predicted to stiffen substantially for such things as job opportunities, competent staff and company establishment. A large number of nations are now allocating considerable resources to the field of education. This trend means that not only work with low added value is moved abroad, but also more qualified tasks, as well as research and development activities. It is asserted in more and more connections that if Sweden, as a small, export dependent country far from the major markets, is to cope with competition in the future, investments in lifelong learning are probably the most effective measures. In order to meet this challenge with regard to both cost and quality, intensive collaboration between educational stakeholders and school governors is a basic condition.

Cooperation gives results

Continual comparisons of cost and quality show that cooperation gives positive effects. Regional collaboration is demonstrably cost-effective and it also enhances the quality of the education programmes. In comparison with the other two big city regions, it appears that GR's member municipalities as a group have the:

- Lowest costs for pre-school and compulsory school activities
- Lowest costs for upper secondary school
- Highest proportion of pupils qualified for upper secondary school
- Smallest number of pupils that take the individual programme
- Most pupils that complete upper secondary school within four years
- Highest proportion that qualify for university and higher education

In addition, 51 % of all 30-year-olds in the Göteborg region have completed post-secondary education. The corresponding figure nationwide is 43 %.

Investments in the field of education

– some concrete examples of the collaboration that has been built up between GR's member municipalities

Education collaboration

– *an open, boundless and accessible education landscape*

For several years there has been substantial cooperation in all school forms, where collaboration has progressed furthest in the upper secondary and upper secondary special needs school area. These school forms have been completely opened up, so that the entire range of upper secondary course programmes can be applied for by all young people, regardless of which municipality they live in. This collaboration is reinforced by activities in "The Common Upper Secondary School", where the region's pupils can select courses that an individual municipality cannot start because there would be too few pupils.

Information to pupils is important in an open education landscape. Together with the member municipalities, GR is responsible for ensuring that the pupils obtain relevant, updated information on the options available. Among other things, an upper secondary fair is held annually for pupils, parents and school staff, where the entire range of upper secondary course programmes is presented.

There are also collaboration agreements for agricultural colleges and adult education. In addition, there are regional agreements for the purchase of pupil places in pre-school class, day recreation centre and compulsory school. The independent schools are also included in this cooperation.

Educational development work is conducted by GR, among other things in the form of experience based learning. One good example of this is the UN and EU role-plays that are arranged in several upper secondary and compulsory schools in the region, with GR providing the impetus. Both competence enhancement and the production of teaching materials occur within the framework of this venture into experience based learning.

Regional illustrations of school

– *costs, quality and perceived user benefit*

GR's activities in follow-up, evaluation and development in the field of education provide prospects for more intensive quality work. In dialogue with the municipalities, illustrations are presented of the organisation, costs and earnings of the activities and the relationships between them.

Together with recurrent attitude polls, this is a good basis for discussion and decisions on the continued quality work of the schools.

A foundation is created for comparisons over time between GR's member municipalities, but also with other regions in the country and in Sweden as a whole. "The illustrations" are also important elements in the work of achieving the educational goals laid down by the Education Group and enabling continuous monitoring of developments within the framework of the collaboration contracts and agreements that GR and the member municipalities have to deal with.

At www.grkom.se/utbildning there are tables and diagrams of about 200 different activity parameters in school and education, which are continually updated, describing all school forms, as well as about 25 diagrams by municipality of the region's compulsory and upper secondary schools.

All the region's municipal and independent schools participate in the upper secondary admissions, where over 14,000 applications to the region's approximately 60 upper secondary schools are registered. The upper secondary course programmes available in the Göteborg region can be applied for by all young people, regardless of where they live in the region. The independent upper secondary schools compete for pupils. The sale and purchase of course programmes between the municipalities is regulated in a regionally agreed price list.

GR has developed a computerised admission system, Indranet, which makes it possible for prospective upper secondary school pupils to register their applications to upper secondary schools themselves via the Internet.

Over 173,000 pupils visit the Indranet web site and every other pupil chooses to register his/her application via the net. Interest in this web site grows uninterruptedly and the goal is for the pupils to have their first choice accepted, but also for the municipal upper secondary schools to be utilised in the best possible way.

The ETT23 and SJU89 magazines discuss school-working life and study and career guidance issues. SJU89, which addresses young people in compulsory school, has a circulation of 40,000. It is issued four times a year. A similar magazine, ETT23, is distributed to upper secondary school pupils, with an annual circulation of 140,000.

School & working life contacts

– a cornerstone in the development of children and young people

Good school and working life contacts give the pupil better prospects for choosing further education and a future career. It is therefore important to arrange meeting places where good cooperation between schools and working life can be developed.

Representatives of working life organisations, BRG and GR have therefore jointly indicated the importance of such cooperation in a “Declaration of intent regarding quality criteria for working life contacts in the perspective of lifelong learning”.

The quality criteria help schools and working life to develop forms of collaboration.

To facilitate contacts between the schools and working life, GR has developed and established a web site, www.praktikplatsen.se. Here pupils that are interested in working life contacts can be matched together with companies that offer such contacts. In order to improve the quality of these contacts continually, GR arranges training courses for both teachers and supervisors that deal with pupils.

The goal is to set up a school-working life centre for all GR’s member municipalities that will inspire, stimulate and support the schools in the region in their work on working life issues.

Working life contacts will constitute a natural part of learning during all the years at school.

About 95 compulsory schools and 19 upper secondary schools and adult education organisers are registered users of www.praktikplatsen.se

IT & Media – teaching aids in the service of schools

All the member municipalities in the region are today covered by GR’s teaching aids service.

Over 550 municipal and the majority of independent schools make use of this service.

In an ever more IT and media intensive time, the importance grows of relevant tools in support of the pupil’s and the school’s learning processes. Collaboration and co-use in the area are of increasing importance.

Pupils expect vigorous IT and media support in learning and with greater demands on cost-effective quality, the joint regional initiatives are a way of resolving these challenges.

Time, money and not least our common environment are saved by coordinating purchases of teaching materials. GR has an extensive sound and film library of over 13,000 titles, consisting of DVD, video, CD and cassette books, which is at the disposal of the region’s pupils and teachers.

New methods of distribution of sound and film are being tested, in the form of so-called fluid technology via the Internet. Current information is also offered regularly on the range of teaching materials, new media, copyright and educational debate on learning and teaching materials.

GR has recourse to a media library worth over 20 MSEK.

Over 190,000 copyright protected media titles are distributed annually to the region’s schools. Since the start in 1995, teaching materials for about 575 million SEK have been purchased and distributed, with a total cost reduction for the member municipalities of about 180 million SEK.

Pedagogiskt centrum meets demands for renewal

– joint regional initiatives for competence enhancement

One of the more essential contributions to the attainment of the regional educational goals is competence enhancement for staff and leaders in the education sector. Educational development work is offered in the form of seminars, longer and shorter training courses, conferences and fairs, where the regional exchange of experience is strengthened at all levels. School staff are given better opportunities of meeting demands for renewal, greater efficiency and improvements in quality in the education system. Focus areas are special needs education, multicultural in school, values, quality improvement, working life contacts, outside world coverage, working environment and health, leadership and IT and media as educational tools.

In 2006 about 200 activities, courses and seminars, conferences and commissioned courses were held under GR's auspices.

The regional leader supply programme

GR runs an extensive leadership training programme as a support and complement to the leader supply work of the member municipalities. In the light of developments that occur in the community, the age structure of staff, trends in the activities and organisation of the municipalities, work on leader supply must be of a long-term, purposeful and offensive nature.

The programme has a number of clear purposes:

- To market work and leadership in municipal/public activities in schools, at university and colleges
- To prepare and train prospective leaders
- To preserve and further enhance the competence of present leaders and specialists
- To generate a common employment market and stimulate greater mobility
- To emphasise the equal opportunity and diversity perspectives, which are both basic conditions in work with leader supply issues.

The initiative has a number of components, such as trainee programmes, a training programme for prospective leaders and one for operative managers. Recurrent training courses are also arranged for mentors and continual competence enhancement for working managers.

Important partnerships in regional education collaboration

In order for the 13 municipalities in the Göteborg region to be able to continue developments in the field of lifelong learning, interaction with other major stakeholders in the area is completely central.

Here below are found some of those that are of great importance to the development that BRG's and GR's politicians have marked out as not only desirable, but entirely necessary, if continued sustainable welfare is to be ensured. BRG and GR have collaborated with these organisations and in projects of strategic importance for a long time.

Business Region Göteborg

Business Region Göteborg, BRG, is a regional company representing 13 municipalities in the Göteborg region. The overall goal is to contribute to a high level of employment and diversified industry and commerce in the region. The Growth and Competence Project acts to bridge the growing gap between the supply of and demand for qualified labour. This is done by, among other things, greater initiatives in school and working life.

Business Region Göteborg, in cooperation with a large number of stakeholders, has developed a national standard for strategic competence supply. Strategic competence supply provides industry and commerce and organisations with tools to ensure their supply of competence, with the purpose of attaining the right competence, in the right place, at the right time, work that is conducted in cooperation with Meritea AB.

Also in cooperation with Meritea AB, a tool has been produced to enable evaluation of knowledge levels. This tool can for example be of assistance to immigrants who have not been able to obtain credit for all their education in their home country and have therefore been referred to work below their level of competence.

The basic idea behind guidance systems for competence supply is that the only real asset an organisation has at its disposal is its competence. Competence will be the most important competition factor during the twenty-first century, not processes or technology. Organisations that have the best trained workforce usually also have above average productivity and profitability.

However, it often appears that organisations fail in control and knowledge of the investments made in their competence. The demographic changes occurring in the western world will lead to a great shortage of well educated people in only a few years. Since the trend is in principle the same all over Europe, the free movement of labour within the EU provides no solution.

It is instead a matter of thinking long-term in competence supply and being attractive as an employer to induce and keep the best competence. Competence supply thereby becomes the most important strategic issue for most organisations, regardless of size, business sector or form of ownership. It is for organisations that realise this and wish to get to grips with these issues that the standard has been produced.

The International School of the Gothenburg Region

The International School of the Gothenburg Region, ISGR, was founded in 1997 at the request of municipalities, academies and industry and commerce in the region. Behind this initiative stands GR, which is also the owner of the school.

The pupils are offered an international education where the teaching is adapted to an increasingly borderless world, so as to be able to face a more open labour market in the 2000s. The school is a strong competitive force in the struggle for new company set-ups. Families that have worked or are going to work abroad and have connections with industry and commerce, the university or other international interests, are the school's main target group.

ISGR has gradually progressed to cover teaching from so-called kindergarten to upper secondary level. The school has pupils from the whole world, together representing 70 different nationalities. The fivefold increase in the number of pupils during the ten years the school has existed shows that there is a need for an international school.

ISGR has about 900 pupils, divided into three sections: an international compulsory school where the teaching language is English, a national compulsory school with Swedish and English and a national upper secondary school where the teaching language is English.

Since the autumn of 2001, ISGR has two campuses: Guldheden School (pre-school to year 6) and Götaberg School (year 7 to 9 and upper secondary). On ISGR's company board there are representatives from both municipalities and industry and commerce.

Meritea AB

Meritea AB has two different branches of activity: validation and strategic competence supply. Meritea was formed on 1 October 2006 and originates from the earlier Validation Centre, which had been in Göteborg since 1998, an activity that has been developed and observed on both a national and international level.

Meritea's assignment is to:

- coordinate and lead the work of developing methods and models for validation,
- develop, support and arrange development programmes in strategic competence supply,
- effect quality assurance of validation processes and certify providers of validation and validation supervisors,
- procure survey and validation work,
- make samples and selections for validation,

- issue competence certificates,
- conduct development work,
- be responsible for information, marketing and the dissemination of knowledge.

Universeum

The experience centre Universeum was inaugurated in 2001 as Sweden's national science centre for natural science and technology, with H.M. the King as its principal patron.

The four founders are Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg University, GR and the West-Swedish Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Swedish industry and commerce, the government, Knut and Alice Wallenberg's Foundation and the KK Foundation have among others contributed to setting up Universeum.

The purpose of the facility is to arouse the interest of children and young people in science and technology. Universeum is also a tourist attraction that shows how man, nature, society and technology are interlinked. The building itself is over 10,000 square metres in area and prized for its architecture. A tour of all the departments in the building is more than three kilometres long! Universeum has about half a million visitors annually.

Göteborg University

Ever since its university college days (1891-1954), Göteborg University has put learning and general education in first place. As early as 1891 it was stated in the professors' contracts that they should hold popular scientific lectures for workers on the premises of the Workers' Union.

This fine tradition has been preserved, though with more modern methods.

In recent years, Göteborg University has signed agreements with, among others, the City of Göteborg on in-depth cooperation with regard to education, further education and commissioned courses. There is also such cooperation with GR, BRG and the Västra Götaland Region. The university provides an important impetus in the development of the region and lifelong learning is one of the university's high priority assignments. Göteborg University has at present about 52,000 students, 5,000 employees and a turnover of about 4.6 billion SEK.

Chalmers University of Technology

During the greater part of its 175-year history, Chalmers has been an important source of competence in western Sweden. Large parts of west Swedish industry have been developed in close collaboration with the university. Business enterprise and close cooperation with industry and the rest of the community still form a strong profile. Particular areas of research that just now are given priority are bioscience, information technology, environmental science and nanotechnology. Chalmers was first in Sweden in the education field to introduce an international education structure. This provides greater opportunities to return for further studies in new areas.

The role of technology in a sustainable society will also be emphasised in the years to come, which puts the area of learning and further studies in sustainable development into focus. There are over 10,000 students and about 2,350 employees at Chalmers, which has a turnover of about 2.2 billion SEK.

Collaboration and cooperation

In terms of economic geography, the Göteborg Region is a coherent region with a common housing and labour market.

The education landscape is becoming increasingly integrated. Culture and leisure recognize no municipal borders. A good climate of collaboration between the region's thirteen municipalities is a basic condition for favourable and sustainable development. Collaboration and cooperation across municipal borders and between different principals and organisations generate the conditions required for the Göteborg region to remain a dynamic region. Through unified action, developments can be influenced and welfare ensured.