

# Study Letter



***“Vocational Orientation through  
Productive Learning  
&  
Productive Learning in  
Vocational Training in  
different European Countries”***



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## Study Letter

### ***Vocational Orientation through Productive Learning & Productive Learning in Vocational Training in different European Countries***

#### **Aims**

Pedagogues who start working with *PL*-classes normally face various changes in their professional life. Within PROVED the pedagogically active participants undergo a parallel process of learning and reflecting when they develop, implement and evaluate a new pedagogical conception in VET.

Besides the school based training and similar sessions at international seminars there is a need of input - according to theoretical basics in the widest sense - and also guidance in reflecting experiences. Therefore a study letter is another element of the teacher training concept.

The study letter "***Vocational Orientation through Productive Learning & Productive Learning in Vocational Training in different European countries***" fulfils a double function.

- At first it supports the acquisition of knowledge about the basic principles of *Productive Learning* within vocational orientation and vocational training.
- Secondly – and this is a very important function as well – it aims to support the professional reflecting process of pedagogues who start working within *PL*-classes.

Teachers in different European countries who plan to work with the national concept of Productive Learning in vocational training can use the following text passages like worksheets. There is space for own notes: questions, notes about national aspects, ideas and first plans for the own pedagogical work.

We recommend exchanging thoughts and questions with other teachers – for example in periodically meetings of collegial advice.

## I. Vocational orientation through *Productive Learning*

The first part of this study letter deals with the process of vocational orientation for young people – a process which is immanent in German *Productive Learning*-classes – and will present various perspectives or insights into this area. We also hope to stimulate discussion around our educational work. This part is subdivided into the following four chapters:

1. ***Productive Learning* as general education for vocational orientation in Germany**
2. **Aims, tasks and challenges for a successful vocational orientation**
3. **Vocational orientation as part of the development of identity and personality**
4. **Methods in vocational orientation**

The first chapter of this Study Letter elaborates on and explains how *Productive Learning* can be effective as **general education for vocational orientation**.

The second chapter addresses the preparation process for making vocational choices as one main aspect of vocational orientation – which is interpreted in different ways in theories of vocational choices. **Aims, tasks and challenges for a successful vocational orientation** or for the development of a young person's competence in making vocational choices are derived from these various perspectives.

'What do I want to become?' and 'How would I like to live?' are only two of the many questions which young people are pursuing during the process of vocational orientation. However, whilst doing so they do not focus exclusively on a possible vocational trajectory. This process – which begins with the phase of adolescence and which is supported through various forms of vocational orientation – is part of the young people's development **of their identities and personalities**. We will look at this process in more detail in chapter 3.

Chapter 4 presents ideas for suitable **methods in vocational orientation** within the educational work of *Productive Learning*, which are meant to stimulate the pursuit of new trajectories.

## II. *Productive Learning* in vocational education

The second part of this Study Letter presents options for the transfer of experiences from *Productive Learning* in general education to the area of vocational training and qualification. Ideas on how *Productive Learning* can be anchored **in vocational orientation** are meant to provide impulses for current approaches for further developments in this area. The latest Erasmus + Project PROVED developed relevant concepts.

The following three chapters concern themselves with the following:

1. **Objectives and potential target groups**
2. **Framework conditions and concepts**
3. **Experiences and challenges in Finland, Germany, Greece and Lithuania**

# I. Vocational orientation through *Productive Learning*

## 1. Productive Learning as general education for vocational orientation

The idea of vocational orientation as part of normal schooling was conceived in Germany during the phase of reconstruction in the aftermath of the Second World War. General School as 'conveyor' of young talent was to address the shortage of jobs among young people as well as the shortage of suitably qualified people in the light of the new and more modern methods of production. The subject of 'Arbeitslehre'<sup>1</sup> (employment lessons) was established as an independent form of tuition in secondary schools. It was aimed at providing pupils with an educationally effective way of approaching the modern world of work.<sup>2</sup>

The framework curricula of comprehensive schools today formulate two tasks:

- **Supporting the learning persons in the development of their personalities**
- **Preparing the learning persons for the challenges of their prospective social world and employment world.**

In this sense, vocational orientation is an essential element of general education.

The report of vocational education which is published annually documents a high number of trainees who do not complete their vocational training because of dissatisfying experiences with training colleges, their discontent with the real tasks and requirements of professional practice, because of external conditions for their practical activities, as well as conflicts with colleagues and line managers. The fickleness and lability of vocational choices made by school leavers comes to light especially in the form of statements which articulate the discrepancy between imagined reality and the



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How is vocational orientation integrated into general education in your country?

What do you know about the rates and reasons of dropouts from vocational education in your country?

<sup>1</sup> The descriptions in different federal states may vary, for example: WAT Wirtschaft (economy), work, technology, WRT Wirtschaft (economy), law, technology, WTH Wirtschaft (economy), technology, household, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dederling, H. in Schudy, J. (ed.), Berufsorientierung in der Schule, Bad Heilbrunn, 2002: 17-31.

actual experiences with the training process. From this we can get important pointers for the support of young peoples' vocational orientation in *Productive Learning*.

### **Vocational orientation through the development of personal interests**

The interests of the young people and their independent realisation at school and at places of practice are at the heart of the pedagogical process in *Productive Learning* right from the beginning. Pupils explore the interfaces for the development of interests for activities as well as the chances to pursue these interests in actual employment, checking their sustainability and their prospect for development.

Over the course of two years pupils have six times the opportunity to reconsider, or to confirm and to refine their choice of field of activity. Through the setting for learning, which enables experiences within real-life situations in conjunction with the processing of these experiences within the associated educational processes, the power of experiencing self-efficacy can be mobilised to a considerable degree. The immediate personal processing of these experiences but also their systematic utilization for educational processes can facilitate a reflective attitude in relation to employment and choice of vocation. This can also lead to a more consciously and decisively dealing with relevant requirements and procedures.

### **Vocational orientation through experiences of activities**

The recognition of personal inclinations towards specific activities is hardly possible without any prior practical experience. School as a place of learning normally presents too few opportunities to experience diverse sensory experiences with activities within real situations and to evaluate them in a differentiated way. However, these experiences in particular form the basis for the recognition of inclinations on the one hand, and for a lasting effective learning on the other hand. *Productive Learning* reclaims such opportunities for experiences for the educational process. They encompass the concrete interdependencies between the person and the materials, tools and other participants as well as the circumstances for the activity. In addition, they aid recognition of important indirect qualities such as usefulness or harmfulness of products, the

How does the education system in your country assure the development of personal interests?

Which kind of practical experiences offers the education system in your country?

assessment of the activity by third parties and in the community as well as the social atmosphere of a sector. Adults as role models who are successfully creating a product with their expert knowledge are also very important. In these circumstances, adolescents may also find out aspects of the private lives of their colleagues and mentors as they are in regular contact with them at the place of practice and over extended periods of time. This intensive involvement in real situations, and with responsible employees in firms and institutions, leads normally to well-founded decisions and to a realistic assessment of the 'world of work'. This is apparent in the low drop-out quota of trainees which is, as a rule, significantly lower than that of the federal states and the national average.<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Abschlussbericht zur Projektevaluation *Produktives Lernen in Sachsen 2008-2014*, S. 61. In Sachsen lag die Abbruchquote bei 14%, sachsenweit in 2011-2012 bei 27,5%, bundesweit in 2011 24,4%.

## 2. Aims, tasks and challenges for a successful vocational orientation



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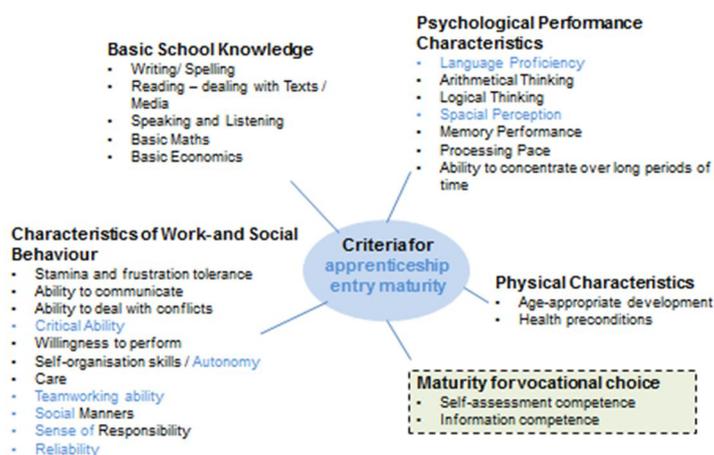
Vocational orientation as a central task of comprehensive schools presupposes that the agents are aware of the concrete objectives that are to be pursued during this process. The definition of objectives in vocational orientation happens against the backdrop of varying perspectives, experiences and expectations of the participants on the one hand, and on the basis of theoretical and scientific deliberations on the other hand. This process involves the young people, their educators and parents, but also their mentors in firms, and the career counsellors of the Federal Office for Employment.

### Maturity for vocational choices as an aim of vocational orientation

*“It is the aim of vocational orientation to guide pupils towards their maturity for vocational choices. This maturity represents one aspect of the entire educational maturity [...]. The maturity for vocational choices entails the competency for self-assessment and for processing information that young people ought to have in view of taking appropriate decisions in respect of their vocation. Young people need to be able to develop personal strategies for making vocational choices.”<sup>4</sup>*

Are your students aware of the broad spectrum of challenges facing them and how do you work with them in order to improve their maturity for training?

The chart below<sup>5</sup> shows “maturity for vocational choices” as part of educational maturity:



<sup>4</sup> Schule und Betriebe als Partner – Ein Handlungsleitfaden zur Stärkung von Berufsorientierung und Ausbildungsreife [www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Bildung/AllgBildung/Handlungsleitfaden-Staerkung-Berufsorient-Ausbildungsreife.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Bildung/AllgBildung/Handlungsleitfaden-Staerkung-Berufsorient-Ausbildungsreife.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> According to: Nationaler Pakt für Ausbildung und Fachkräftenachwuchs in Deutschland, 2006: Kriterienkatalog zur Ausbildungsreife, Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Hrsg.), Nürnberg, Berlin, S. 7. Der Kriterienkatalog ist zu beziehen über: [ibro@arbeitsagentur.de](mailto:ibro@arbeitsagentur.de) sowie als Download unter [www.pakt-fuer-ausbildung.de](http://www.pakt-fuer-ausbildung.de)

These five criteria for a desired level of educational maturity illustrate the diverse objectives which must be achieved by young people. At the same time, the chart also shows that vocational orientation makes only sense in connection with the various other key development areas. Although individual preferences are possible, the five criteria ought to play a role in all learning areas of *Productive Learning* or in all school subjects respectively.

### Tasks of vocational orientation

In general, the catalogue of criteria above makes it possible to derive a comprehensive plan for the development of competencies which, in turn, form a bundle of tasks for the educators. It includes all so-called key competencies which are required in vocational training such as individual (personal), social, method, and subject competencies. In relation to vocational orientation specifically, three tasks can be identified for the *Productive Learning* educators:

- **Facilitation of personal development**
- **Preparation for requirements of industry**
- **Actively supporting the process of vocational choice**

The mentoring of learning at places of practice in the form of individual educational counselling with educators is a crucial instrument in order to support young people as they – over the course of two years – constantly reflect on, revise or re-affirm their decisions. Being able to choose various vocational areas, different places of practice within a given vocational area, or a deeper engagement with one specific place of practice by choosing to spend a second trimester there offers a broad spectrum of variations in terms of personally defined orientation, decisions and potential realisation during the process of vocational orientation.

The three aspects

**Orientation > Decision > Realisation**

can be pursued from the start of each new trimester, thus repeating or consolidation particular phases or elements.

How do your students understand the term 'maturity for training' and how would they like to become more mature in this respect?

Please remember your own vocational choice. What were the key influences that formed your decision?

### **Challenges of vocational orientation**

The diverse challenges during the process of vocational orientation are due to the heterogeneity of the target group with its broad range of individual needs and different stages of development on the one hand. On the other hand, a constantly changing environment and labour market require a great deal of flexibility in order to consider current developments for the area of orientation. Realizing 'influencing variables' and 'theories of vocational choices' can help us to consider possible challenges and to encounter them in practice.

### **Influencing variables during the process of vocational choice<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Exogen Influences</b>	
<b>Economic Influences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General state of the economy</li> <li>• State of regional economy</li> <li>• Structure of professions</li> <li>• Situation on the labour market / labour market policies</li> <li>• Remuneration conditions / Earning prospects</li> </ul>	<b>Socio-cultural or Socio-psychological Influences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Influences/Epoch Influence</li> <li>• Socio-economic Class</li> <li>• Family / Parents</li> <li>• School</li> <li>• Peer Groups</li> <li>• Vocational and Educational counselling</li> <li>• Industrial Pressure Groups</li> </ul>
<b>Endogen Influences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character</li> <li>• Inclinations</li> <li>• State of development</li> </ul>	

What is the discussion about in your country?

The agents of vocational orientation should be aware of the fact that the challenges that have to be met in order to reach the objectives do not exclusively reside in the personal development of the young people. On the contrary, there are many external influences that play a crucial role in view of the intended decision for a vocational choice. Discussion and thematization of these external factors – particularly within the 'communication group' – should be part of the entire orientation process. Doing so can have a positive impact on the sustainability of the decision of a vocational choice (cf. chapter 4).

Current articles about vocational orientation emphasise the importance of a 'practice orientation' in particular – and underline the significance of the structured and systematic preparation for and mentoring of experiences of practice. If young people in *Pro-*

<sup>6</sup> According to Seifert: Handbuch der Berufspsychologie 1977

*ductive Learning* are asked about what helped them make up their mind towards a vocational choice, they stress the important role that the practice orientation played for them.<sup>7</sup>

### Experiences from *Productive Learning* as an aid for making decisions for education and training (ranking)

1. I was able to gather experiences within a field of practice over a period of time of three to four months at a time.
2. I was able to test my actions within the world of work.
3. I was able to explore and examine my interests and strengths.
4. My practice mentors assisted me in my vocational choices.
5. I was able to explore the concrete demands of the profession I wanted to be trained for.

Which correlations do you see between general / vocational education and stable choice for a vocation?



#### Literature:

Schudy, Jörg (Hrsg.): Berufsorientierung in der Schule, Grundlagen und Praxisbeispiele, Klinkhardt, Bad Heilbrunn, 2002



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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ergebnisse Verbleibstudie IPLE: *Produktives Lernen in Sachsen*, Abschlussbericht zur Projektevaluation 2008 – 2014, S. 67, Eigenverlag, Berlin, 2014

### 3. Vocational orientation as part of the development of identity and personality



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'...and what do you do?' This is very often the first question we ask when we meet new people or the first question that we are being asked. This question may frequently refer to spare time activities but normally refers to employment and professional life - to the way we earn our living. In Germany, paid work is organised on the basis of professions which means that the profession plays a vital role in the distribution of labour. Furthermore, a profession is very often also a primary source for our own self-esteem<sup>8</sup>. Employment offers the opportunity to place oneself within a social context, to maintain one's self-esteem, and to further develop one's personality.

#### **Personal development**

The laws that govern schools in the federal states stipulate that the promotion of the personal development is a central mission. Schools want to enable and support the personal development of their pupils. Young people should be able to develop characteristics which correspond to their own personalities, their interests, their inclinations and talents - attributes which also distinguish people. In *Productive Learning* this is realised through the personal aspect (Personenbezug).

#### **Development of identity**

The term identity goes beyond the concept of personality. Identity is derived from an acceptance of social roles and their external recognition. During the process of identity formation personal ideas about the self are being developed. When we are born we are not capable of self-reflection and we cannot differentiate between self and other. However, infants are able to recognise physical realities, respond to them, and progressively learn what consequences their reactions have for them. Through the progressive development of the brain, the growth in neuronal networks, the I gradually forms itself and with it the ability for self-reflection: we are able to process and reflect on information and reactions in respect to our own actions from our external environment. We develop 'mini-theories' about our roles and understanding of ourselves on the basis of usually very diverse and sometimes even contradictory information and impulses. We then tend to coordinate and combine these theories in order to satisfy our basic

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Beck, U., Brater, M., Daheim, H., *Soziologie der Arbeit und der Berufe*, Reinbek b. Hamburg, 1980: 160

need for unity and form. As our world is becoming ever more complex and offers increased choices, our identity also becomes more complex and the need to co-ordinate these various 'me' is getting bigger<sup>9</sup>.

The area of employment - starting with vocational orientation and vocational choice, vocational training and finally paid work - plays a central role for our potential identity development because of its significant status in society. Three basic psychological needs are important here:

- **The need for feeling competent when we are experiencing our own ability to act;**
- **The need for autonomy when we are experiencing our own freedom to act (personal choices);**
- **The need for social embeddedness through the feeling of acceptance within our human relations.**

In *Productive Learning*, the processes of personal development and identity development can be enabled, supported and monitored to a considerable degree. First and foremost, the area of 'learning in practice' presents an opportunity to discover inclinations and talents, to pursue them and to experience and develop competencies, autonomy and social embeddedness at various places of practice.

The learning areas in school, and especially the *individual educational counselling*, support young people during the process of evaluating their experiences and of integrating gained insights into their own self-concept. To achieve this - apart from paying due attention to required documentation tasks in terms of completeness and accuracy within the framework of learning at practice - the focus must be on the promotion of young peoples' self-awareness and self-reflection.

How can young people be sensitized for their own conscious development of their identity and their personality?

How can the process of the development of identity and personality be monitored so that important experiences and insights can be documented and evaluated?

Which tools could be useful?



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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Meinert, S., Stollt, M. „Ich bin eine seltsame Schleife“ Teikyo Campus, Mai 2009, bpb-Materialien

## 4. Methods in vocational orientation

In *Productive Learning*, the use of diverse methods during school days plays an important role in order to meet the needs and requirements of the young people (personal aspect) adequately, and in order to create, time and time again, fruitful learning situations within which a connection with the experiences of activity at the places of practice is established (cf. practice aspect). The following paragraph will offer pointers for methods which particularly support the process of vocational orientation. You can find an extensive description of methods, for example, in the materials on 'orientation phase' and as a handout for relevant seminar topics.

### Focus: Self-perception / External perception

- I – Bag, body outline
- Mind-Map 'Who am I and when yes how many'?
- Identity shooting target

### Focus: Ideas about life/Meaning of life

- Phantasy Journey
- Written or painted/drawn representations of what the future may look like
- Future Workshop

### Focus: Analysis of professional biographies

- Questioning colleagues at the places of practice, neighbours, relatives
- Reading and interpreting curriculum vitae
- Family tree of vocations or of important personal relations

### Focus: Demands and expectations about professions

- Targeted exploration at places of practice and presenting vocational areas and types of vocation in the 'communication group'
- Visiting the Centre for Vocational Information at the Federal Employment Agency
- Research into the diversity of vocational information programmes (developing own criteria, testing and evaluation)
- Preparation of visit to training fair (planet-beruf)
- Vocation-Rally



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Which activities and methods do you use in order to support the process of vocational orientation?

It is important that the methods are individually documented in order to secure important experiences and insights which result from the use of these methods in the long term - so that they can be revisited and considered again during the process of vocational orientation.



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## II. ***Productive Learning in vocational training***

Nationally as well as internationally - experiences in *Productive Learning* relate to the realisation of this form of education within general education. The major characteristic of *Productive Learning* – learning in school and in real employment situations outside of school – suggests, however, also a realisation of this form of education within the area of vocational training. Other characteristics which should be transmitted as far as possible to vocational training are:

- **Individual learning**
- **Connection of school and practice learning**
- **New role of pedagogues: less teaching and more counselling and moderating the learning process**
- **Closer relationship between pedagogues and students through smaller teams**

In Germany, first 'pilot projects' for the preparation of vocational training have already been carried out at a Berlin training college. In Finland, our colleagues endeavour to continue with the monitoring of young people by *Productive Learning* educators – particularly the process of *individual educational counselling* – within the area of vocational training.

In October 2014, a project within the framework of the international ERASMUS + programme started to test and to establish *Productive Learning* in vocational training. The IPLE, being one of eight partners from Germany, Finland, Greece and Lithuania initiated this two-year long project and directed the management and further training of participating educators.

Under the project title PROVED (*Productive Learning in Vocational Education and Training*) various concepts were being developed which outline the possible implementation of *Productive Learning* within vocational training whilst considering national contexts. During a second phase, starting in September 2015, these concepts were then realised. The results of this project, which was completed in September 2016, fed into this chapter of our Study Letter.

### **1. Common aims and possible target groups**

The aims of *Productive Learning* in vocational education are identical to the aims and objectives of *Productive Learning* in general education. They focus in particular on the personal development of the learners. Subject-related learning on the basis of individual learning interests should be connected with the experiences of activity of the learners.

Within the area of vocational education these aims are supplemented by:

- **Orientation within a concrete vocational field,**
- **professional qualification,**
- **preparation for integration into the labour market,**
- **starting employment.**

In case participants have already taken decisions in respect of a prospective profession or a vocational area during the period of preparation for vocational training or within the area of training and further training, the importance of general vocational orientation as an aim in *Productive Learning* will diminish. Thus, the orientation within a vocational area or the various opportunities to work within a given professional area will take its place. The trend towards 'specialisation' within the world of work underlines the necessity and meaningfulness of such an aim in *Productive Learning* in vocational education.

As an ultimate goal, *Productive Learning* is to support the orientation towards qualifications which are based on competencies within the national system of vocational education. This currently desired development on European level is to ensure the comparability of vocational qualifications, thus making the process of a transnational recognition of vocational qualifications much easier. Orientated on the European Framework of Qualifications (EQR), *Productive Learning* is to pursue the idea of 'output orientation' and to try to detach itself from the previous 'input orientation'. This seems to be possible within vocational education under the aspect of individual competency development in *Productive Learning* in particular.

The target group of *Productive Learning* in vocational education cannot be described specifically – due to nationally different vocational education systems and educational forms.<sup>10</sup> Though as an alternative educational form it should be open to all individuals who are independently organised within vocational education, who are willing to follow the basic principles of *Productive Learning* and who, first and foremost, are willing to learn voluntarily in preparation for vocational training, in vocational training and in professional development.

## 2. Framework conditions and conception

The framework conditions for the realisation of *Productive Learning* in vocational education vary considerably within the federal states. The different standards and vocational education systems of the federal states are particularly noticeable given the current process of European endeavours to make professional qualifications more comparable across borders (ECE-VET). In Europe, many different 'types' of vocational educational systems exist. Hence, there

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. chapter 4 Part I. Overviews and more information about national vocational education system in Europe can be obtained from 'Europäische Zentrum für die Förderung der Berufsausbildung CEDEFOP' [www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)

are many factors that may influence a possible realisation of *Productive Learning* within these systems.

If the state is solely responsible for it, as in the case of Greece for example, then vocational education is normally organised in schools and there is hardly any interaction between school and free enterprise as a consequence. A relevant culture - but even more importantly so a legal system - needs to be created and developed first so that firms are able to get involved in vocational education on the one hand, and to allow experiences of activity within the world of work to be connected with the learning that takes place in school on the other hand. These pre-conditions are already established in Germany because of its dual vocational education system: here practical experiences from working in firms - which *Productive Learning* requires – can be gained.

The changes required within national framework conditions in order to establish *Productive Learning* within vocational education are thus very different, and cultural and social conditions need to be taken into account. The acceptance of this new educational form within a national educational system depends on whether:

- **Support for the concept of *Productive Learning* can be ensured from regional or national education administrations,**
- **practical experiences within the free labour market can be gained as part of the qualification,**
- **a legal basis for the new educational concept can be created.**

Existing concepts of *Productive Learning* from general education e.g. *Framework Conception of Productive Learning in Berlin Secondary Schools* provide a basis for new *Productive Learning*-concepts in vocational education. Apart from new content (curriculum framework) which corresponds to vocational qualifications, the following conceptual changes seem necessary:

- **The number of existing educators in the team, as perhaps more subject educators or experts are required,**
- **the timetable needs to correspond to the national standards of the vocational education laws,**
- **the procedure for examinations and the evaluation of performance need to correspond to the national standards of the vocational education laws,**
- **temporal structure (years of training, semester, trimester),**
- **duration of *Productive Learning* according to specific vocational training.**

The following chapter provides experiences on the above mentioned aspects of the participating PROVED partners from Finland, Germany, Greece and Lithuania.

### 3. Experiences and challenges in Finland, Germany, Greece and Lithuania

During the implementation phase the project partners made various experiences which are in brief form documented in this chapter. Thus it gives an insight into the experiences and challenges faced by the PROVED partners.

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#### FINLAND :

Work-based learning is an important part of the whole vocational training in Finland. It is not only for training, it is also the place where students are doing their competence-based tests and marketing their own skills for future jobs. *Productive Learning* emphasizes student needs and it completes our concept of personalisation.

We integrated the following elements of *Productive Learning* into the vocational training for our project learning group:

- **Personalisation:** it starts when the person applies for the competence-based qualification and runs through the whole project.
- **Personal Learning Programme:** We start to recognise the applicant's previously acquired skills and other starting points, determine the most suitable qualification and assess the need for guidance and support.

We chose for the project PROVED a group which belongs to the young adults' skills program which is one part of The Youth Guarantee in Finland<sup>11</sup>. This program is for those aged between 20 and 29 who have completed only basic education. A young adults' skills programme will provide better opportunities for applying for vocational education and training leading to a degree or other qualification. PROVED is also suitable for all adult students (for adults we have no age limits).

#### What is new in PROVED?

We wanted to use new technological tools in education to offer different learning environment and to find new ways to teach. We use our learning systems to encourage youth to develop their own visions and equip them with the skills to pursue those visions. We also encourage youth to use their own experiments and share with each other what they have learned. We also developed peer learning (similar to the 'communication group' concept in *Productive Learning*) as one method of assessment.

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<sup>11</sup> The intention of the youth guarantee is to ensure that young people have access to education, training and employment and prevent them from being excluded from the society ([www.oph.fi/download/148967\\_The\\_Youth\\_Guarantee\\_in\\_Finland.pdf](http://www.oph.fi/download/148967_The_Youth_Guarantee_in_Finland.pdf)).

## **Framework conditions of the competence-based qualification system**

The competence-based qualification system provides adults with a flexible way of demonstrating, renewing and maintaining their vocational skills, or with possibilities for qualifying for a new profession when their work tasks change. The competence-based qualification system recognises competencies acquired in a variety of ways (through work experience, studies or other activities).

### **Personalisation**

Personalisation refers to customer-oriented planning and implementation of guidance, advisory and support measures for a student engaged in preparatory training for a competence-based qualification and a candidate attaining a competence-based qualification. Personalisation is divided into three phases:

- 1. Application** for a competence-based qualification and the related preparatory training

We arranged advisory forums for our applicants. There they got all information about the competence-based qualification system, about the support and guidance system, benefits and how we are going to measure applicants previously acquired skills. We encouraged the applicants to start to recognize their own skills and strengthens by themselves. They had also a group counselling session to learn about the vocational skills requirements, the targets of the assessment and the criteria. A first important task was to design an own timetable and to think about how to handle the everyday time management. The aim was to make them realise how to combine studies and everyday life. They also had to pass different kind of tests and small practical working demonstrations. After the recognizing process the teacher and the student create the individual study plan together. It was documented and signed by the applicant and the teacher. Both the advisory forum and the interview were part of the personalisation process and the beginning of self-assessment.

- 2. Completion of the qualification**

When individualising the completion of a qualification, the vocational skills requirements, targets of assessment and criteria and methods of demonstrating vocational skills defined in the Qualification Requirements, must be complied with in every case.

We had group guidance and counselling for the candidates how to prepare a plan for completing the qualification or module. The candidates were supported to find out how they are going to display the vocational skills requirements in working life in real situations. The can-

didates had also personal guidance and counselling. The candidates got special support when they had difficulties in reading and writing skills or other needs.

The candidates made a self-assessment regarding the skills to do the job. A self-assessment can be done orally or in writing. Photos and videos, etc. can be added.

### 3. Acquiring the required vocational skills

In the personalisation of the required vocational skills we identified also the needs for support and guidance. We discussed the possibilities to find the place for work based learning. The personalisation process involves the examination of and joint agreement on the most suitable forms of education provision and learning environment which the education provider can offer, and of the most appropriate teaching and assessment methods and steering measures. The personalisation process

- familiarises the student with him/herself as learner,
- provides guidance in the planning of flexible and suitable individual learning paths, and study choices,
- if necessary, provides advice and guidance towards support services provided by other experts for example special needs teacher.

#### Needs for the future development

Technology can play an indispensable deepening and accelerating role across all education processes. Students use it to produce work; teachers use it as part of learning activity design, incorporating multiple digital resources and strategies (from video lectures to social media to gaming expert inquiry); new assessments use technology in myriad ways; and schools and systems use it for collaboration, data sharing, learning analytics and stakeholder communication. We need these digi-tools for teachers, students and for job counselors.

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## GERMANY



The system of vocational education in Germany is called the `Dual System`. One reason for this term is the combination of two learning places: over a period of usually three and a half years, the `Dual System` comprises two thirds of practical and theoretical training at a workplace in a company and one third of general theoretical education at a comprehensive vocational college focusing on the field of expertise related to the chosen profession. Future apprentices apply for an apprenticeship at a company, undergo job interviews and assessment tests and, in case of a successful application, sign a training contract with the company. The

company enrolls their apprentices at the respective vocational college. Vocational colleges and companies are in close contact about the development of the students and the requirements needed in the respective jobs.

**Case example:**

A 16-year old person with `MSA` (intermediate secondary school certificate) successfully applies for an apprenticeship as an industrial mechanic at the BMW motorcycle works in Berlin. She/he signs a training contract and starts the apprenticeship at this company on 1st September. All industrial mechanics in Berlin receive their general theoretical education at Georg Schlesinger vocational college (GSS). So this person will be enrolled at GSS, spends two weeks in a row at BMW and one week at school with other industrial mechanics from other companies and then again two weeks at the company and so on and so forth. At the end of the apprenticeship the apprentice has to take final exams in front of an examination board consisting of teachers from vocational school, instructors from the company and representatives of the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Both these exams and the final school report must be passed. Many apprentices are trained for the needs in workforce of their companies and receive a work contract afterwards.

Most German companies are in need of good trainees these days and an apprenticeship at a prestigious company is popular among school-leavers, even among graduates from Grammar schools (Gymnasium). The minimum precondition for an apprenticeship is the basic secondary school certificate (BBR), but most people with just the basic certificate don't see a fair chance of getting a vocational training of their choice. Most applicants come up with MSA or even the German Abitur.

Here, **Productive Learning** comes in useful. Since the dual system is some kind of *Productive Learning* in itself, *Productive Learning* is being established in the field of vocational preparation in Germany. *Productive Learning* offers a fine opportunity for young people to gain experience and basic expertise in certain vocational fields on the one hand and, on the other hand, to learn how to organize oneself, how to present and, last but not least, how to learn more effectively. The main aim of *Productive Learning* in VET in Berlin is to enable students, who failed with applications so far and/or failed their final exams at secondary school, to apply successfully for a training which corresponds with their interests and abilities. This may include the acquisition of the MSA.

The **target group** of *Productive Learning* in VET is mainly young people with a lack of orientation about what to do in their future professional life. Persons applying for the *Productive Learning* class at Georg Schlesinger vocational college, though, ought to have a certain interest in metal or transport technology because the practical work placement of the first trimester is the metal workshop.

*Productive Learning* in VET at GSS is being tried out within the framework of a large-scale school project called „IBA“ – Integrated Vocational Preparation. About 10 Berlin-based vocational colleges take part in this project. The major aim of this project is also to combine basic practical training in certain professional fields with secondary school exam preparation. Students who enrol in these one-year courses have usually fulfilled compulsory school attendance (10 years), but have not succeeded in gaining the MSA. In the ideal case they are interested in the field of expertise the college they enrol at specializes in, but, reality looks different. Often students would choose a college close to their home. Here, *Productive Learning* comes in useful, too, because, by and large, students are finished with metal technology after the first trimester in case they decide that it is not of greater interest for their professional choice. The *Productive Learning*-project at GSS fully corresponds with the requirements of the IBA-concept, e.g. the timetable (can be seen in the detailed concept).

**The conception of the *Productive Learning*-idea at GSS** includes a trimester structure within the regular school year. Each trimester covers a period of about three months and the students visit school on three days and spends the other two days at their practical work placement.

Trimester structure of the school year		
~ 3 months	~ 3 months	~3 months

Structure of the week				
School	School	School	Practice	Practice

As mentioned above, the first trimester is carried out training on the job. This is not compulsory, though, when students are able to find a practical work placement outside school for the two days. The other two trimesters have to be spent at a placement in the „real world“ and students who do not focus on gaining the MSA in the first place have the opportunity to spend three days at the practical work placement. Students ought to pay special consideration to finding a placement at an enterprise which offers apprenticeships in the third trimester.

**School days** are organized as follows. On two days a ‘communication group’ of about 45 minutes takes place in which all kinds of aspects are discussed and students are supposed to learn to express themselves better and to listen to and reflect on other students’ issues. This seems to be a challenge for most students as they constantly fail to acknowledge that this is learning and developing, too. Even a variety of different methods like flashlight, prompt cards, speed-dating, etc. has not helped to improve some students’ attitude towards the ‘communication group’. As a whole, though, we think that this format nevertheless contributes to the generally pleasant atmosphere in the class (in comparison to the somewhat diffi-

cult situation in most regular IBA-classes). Students also get an overview about the week's plan and due tests or other important dates at the end of the first 'communication group' meeting of the week. This way they are supposed to learn what they will have to do in the 'independent learning' periods. For these periods there are trays with all kinds of learning materials on offer. These trays are updated on a regular basis. Students check their solutions independently with folders containing model answers. Students may work on their own, in pairs or groups. There are always two pedagogues present in the lessons are taught between one to three times a week, mainly with student-centered methods. These have been introduced to monitor students' progresses as a whole and in accordance with students' requests. Counselling of students often takes place during school periods. This is made possible by the presence of two teachers at all times, but it is not an ideal solution. The teachers involved in the *Productive Learning*-class are responsible for other courses at GSS, too, and do not have any temporal scope within their schedules. Nevertheless, personal counselling takes place and successfully at that, for all students consider their pedagogues trustworthy contact partners for all sorts of issues. Of course, this also contributes to the mostly pleasant atmosphere in the class. As a support to carry out regular counselling at the practical work placement a new colleague, an educational counsellor, was introduced at the end of the first trimester/beginning of the second trimester. This is not unproblematic because this colleague does not take responsibilities within the classroom. In the new school year this colleague will be introduced to the new class right from the beginning and thus will be way more integrated in the *Productive Learning*-class.

**Results of presentation exams and other performance** reviews show that *Productive Learning* offers a viable alternative to the regular IBA-classes for certain students.

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**GREECE**



In Greece, VET is in transition. The 2013 legislation on secondary education aims to promote VET and strengthen its work-based component. The action plan for youth employment intends to link "smoothly" both education and work, upgrade VET, boost apprenticeship and broaden career guidance offered to young people. This comes at a time when addressing high youth unemployment and other labour market imbalances are more urgent than ever.

According to the law on secondary education (Law 4186/2013), vocational education is provided by the vocational upper secondary school. These schools (public or private) are found-

ed exclusively by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and may be operate during morning or evening. The minimum age for enrolment in a vocational evening school is 16.

The public vocational upper secondary schools offer the specialties that are listed in the legislation. The programs are organized by sector, group and speciality, with most sectors offering two or more specialties. The sectors currently covered are information science, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering/electronics/automation, construction, environment and natural resources, administration and economics, agronomy-food technology and nutrition, welfare and occupations in the merchant marine (captain, mechanic).

According to the new law specialties should be tailored to regional and national economic needs, following the recommendations of the ministries, regional administrations and social partners. Curricula can be developed according to the European credit system for VET (ECVET), and take into account, where these exist, related job profiles certified by the National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP).

Programs at vocational upper secondary school can lead to two levels:

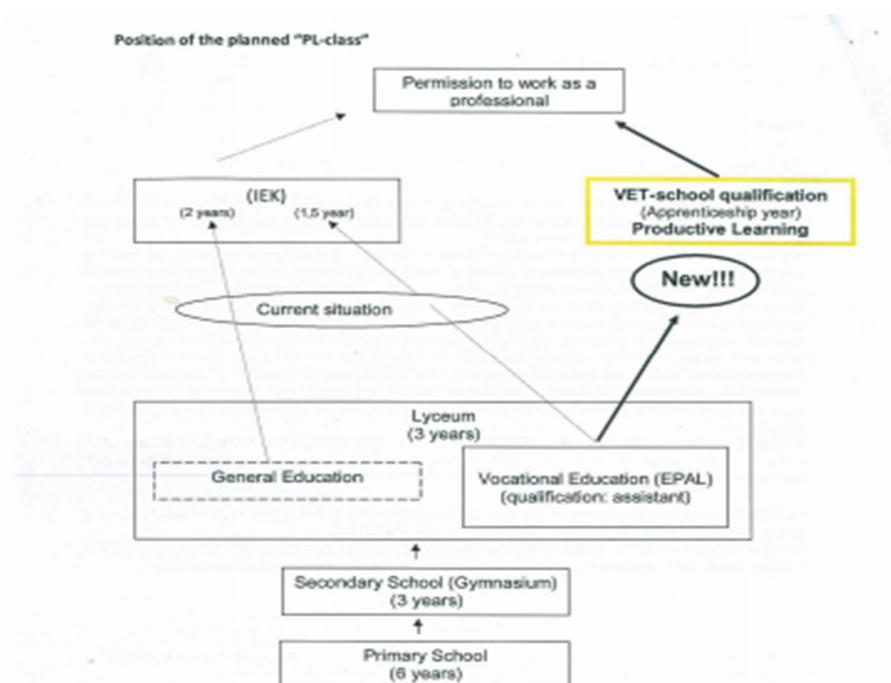
- (a) A three-year program;
- (b) An additional 'apprenticeship year'.

The 'apprenticeship year' (education in the workplace or in school laboratories) **where Productive Learning will be applied**, which is optional and is an innovation introduced by the new law, is open for those students who have earned the certificate and diploma attesting completion of the three-year upper secondary education at a vocational upper secondary school. Implementing OAED's "dual-system learning" principle, it includes learning at the workplace, a specialization course, and preparatory courses for certification at the school. The vocational upper secondary schools and OAED share responsibility for implementing the apprenticeship year, assigning the students to work placements, and all that this entails.

Those who complete an upper secondary program are awarded a vocational upper secondary school certificate (equivalent to the general upper secondary school certificate) and a specialization diploma at European qualifications framework (EQF) level 4, following school examinations administered by EPAL. Graduates of the "apprenticeship year" receive a diploma at EQF level 5 issued jointly by the Ministry of Education and OAED, after procedures for certification of their qualifications by the national agency have been completed. Graduates of a vocational upper secondary evening school do not have to enroll in the 'apprenticeship year' but can apply for certification of their qualifications if they have worked for at least 600 days in the specialty which they will graduate after the third year. The organization which is responsible for certification of qualifications and for awarding specialization diplomas to graduates of 'apprenticeship year' is EOPPEP, either alone or jointly with OAED.

Those who pass certification examinations receive both the related specialization diploma along with a license to practice their trade. As appropriate, other ministries that issue corresponding occupational licenses may take part in conducting the examinations.

For the ‘apprenticeship year’ responsibility for students’ work placements and associated matters is shared equally by both the school (EPAL) and OAED. ‘Apprenticeship year’ programs are to be financed from national and/or EU funds, with no contribution from the participating enterprises or students, in contrast to most other European countries that implement apprenticeship systems.



## PROVED in 2nd Laboratory Center of Patras

The project **PROVED** took place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Laboratory Center of Patras and at first the target group was among the expertise from the fields of: Mechanical, Electronics, Electrical, Computers, Health-Welfare, and Graphical Arts.

### Introduction

The «apprenticeship year» (education in the workplace or in school laboratories), which is optional and is an innovation introduced by the new law, is open for those students who have earned the certificate and diploma attesting completion of the three-year upper secondary education at a vocational upper secondary school. The prerequisites were:

- learn in a more self-responsible way,
- open-minded to new methods of learning,
- learn to find practical places themselves,

- learn to reflect the own learning process (individual skills),
- learn how to work with other people (minimum social skills).

During the admission phase the following steps were issued:

- information about PROVED project,
- students' applications,
- decision about an invitation for the interview,
- interview (along guiding questions),
- invitation to project start (orientation).

The 'orientation phase', lasted for a total of four weeks and the aims of the learning-group's orientation were:

- build up the group,
- reflect the individual situation and needs,
- certain knowledge about the chosen vocational field,
- understand how *Productive Learning* is running,
- make the first practical experiences.

The following criteria of participants' evaluation were issued:

- interest of the applicant about *Productive Learning*,
- applicant's intention for dropout,
- social economic and living conditions of the applicant,
- school behavior of the student,
- sex and age,
- grades,
- field of expertise.

At the beginning, the participants' background were:

- six students (in the process one of the students, due to political changes in local schools had to transfer to another school),
- adults, age: 19-27,
- men,
- fields:
  - ✓ Mechanical (3),
  - ✓ Electrical (2),
- employment:
  - ✓ 2 Family business,
  - ✓ 1 Company,
  - ✓ 2 Employed in different fields.

The curriculum and methodology included the following subjects:

- Technology of Mechanical Constructions (Mechanics) (2 hrs),
- Design and description of machines (Mechanics) (2 hrs),
- Freehand Drawing (Graphical Arts) (4 hrs),
- Principals of Electronics (Electronics) (4 hrs),
- Electrical Installations (Electrical) (4 hrs),
- Computer Programming (Computers) (4 hrs),
- Usage of Computers (All fields) (1 hr).

The detailed schedule for the school year 2015-2016 (pilot program) was as follows:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Working in practical places (7hrs)				
				Communication group (2hrs)
Regular courses Laboratory courses (5hrs)				

The proposed schedule for the next school year (2016-2017) would be:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Learning in practical places (3hrs)	Learning in practical places (7hrs)	Learning in practical places (3hrs)	Learning in practical places (7hrs)	Learning in practical places (7hrs)
Communication group (1hr)		Communication group (1hr)		
<b>Supportive laboratory courses (3hrs)</b> Mechanics (2) Graphical Arts (2) Electronics (2) Electrical (2) Computers (2) <i>Usage of computers (all fields) (1)</i>		<b>Supportive laboratory courses (3hrs)</b> Mechanics (2) Graphical Arts (2) Electronics (2) Electrical (2) Computers (2) <i>Usage of computers (all fields) (1)</i>		

During the implementation of the project there was a high degree of cooperation and a «network» was developed among the school community, KPA, KESYP–GRASEP, local - regional authorities, social partners, commercial chambers, unions, Employers National Centre for Vocational Guidance (E.K.E.P.). The «network» within the school community involved

various tasks as: handling - information exchange, exchanging expertise, executive support and solving various problems.

At the end of the project, the students will benefit in many ways:

- having deeper understanding of a subject matter through application in a practical context, their motivation that comes from solving problems with immediate consequences,
- the generic work skills (such as collaborating in teams and knowing how to use «exercises» as a learning experience),
- the alternating learning environment between the workplace and school and
- mainly the students will be in an “employee status” and are paid for their work.

The companies who will get involved will benefit by creating a specialized group of employees, improving also their competitiveness, innovation, productivity and they will reduce their operating expenses and will become more «attractive» for the employees.

Also according to a recent research the companies will benefit in the future, because they will have skilled employees who will meet the needs of the enterprise (86 %). They can choose the most suitable candidates in future recruitment (62 %). The apprentices contribute to business productivity, amortizing part of the training costs (45 %).

The challenges include:

- acquisition of work experience,
- linking education with the labor market,
- development of social and personal skills of students,
- strengthening the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME),
- the teaching staff must be trained in order to tackle educational adequacy problems associated with the student's contact with the high-level of competitiveness in the labor market,
- facing and solving problems created during the internship for example the behavior of employers or violation of human as well as labor rights,
- «staffing» of professions with skilled and experienced employees.

Finally, *Productive Learning* is achieved through:

- experiences, practice and personal events,
- employment interaction and social cooperation
- and, as a result, **the learner acquires professional identity and consciousness.**

The following conclusions were issued among the participants:

- The important role of teachers in providing counselling to students throughout the duration of the program **mostly in a voluntary basis**.
- Businesses operating as receptors of students are monitored, initially on their ability to provide excellent training, and periodically for being eligible to maintain this possibility.
- Cooperation, participation and therefore the joint responsibility of all stakeholders in the development of internship/apprenticeship: the success of these systems is believed to be based to a significant degree in the common trust of the social partners, relevant government agencies, parents and students.
- The existence of intermediaries that are either private or public/local government. The role of institutions is to mediate, that is to act as a channel of communication between students and businesses on informing students for available positions of internship/apprenticeship and, in some cases, to assign students to the appropriate positions. These organizations, besides communication fora of various stakeholders, aimed essentially at reconciling the social and economic needs, and to improve generally the institution of internship/apprenticeship.

*Productive Learning* aspires to create three very important learning connections:

- **Personal connection with the learner himself:** The importance of learning and of the learning content for the learner's personality and development, for his strengths and needs is to be emphasized; the learner is transformed from object to actively engaged subject shaping his own education process; this form of learning offers a very personal, practice-oriented and therefore very successful access to learning;
- **Practical connection:** Learning grows out of productive activity and feeds back into it; in consequence, learning connects with everyday processes and structures and specific fields of action; this is what sets *Productive Learning* apart from traditional learning settings where it is common for purely theoretical knowledge to be taught and no connection forged with real life;
- **Cultural connection:** In addition to subject-specific processes, each learning situation also contains social, societal and cultural aspects from which the learner can benefit; creating these cultural connections can contribute to integrating the individual into society.

The benefits of applying *Productive Learning* in Greek Vocational Schools include among others:

- a deeper understanding of academic subject matter through application in a practical context,

- motivation that comes from solving problems with immediate consequences, and generic work skills (such as collaborating in teams) and
- knowing how to use work as a learning experience.



In Lithuania two different schools within the VET system made first experiences with *Productive Learning* elements in their different vocational training sectors. Both schools, Kedainiai Vocational Education Centre (VETC) and Kedainiai Adult and Youth Education Centre (AYEC) are situated in the center of Lithuania, in Kedainiai. The Youth and Education Centre (AYEC) is already experienced with *Productive Learning* in general education, as they participated in a two-years project to implement *Productive Learning* and to qualify teachers in the new pedagogical approach.

### **Kedainiai Vocational Education Centre (VETC)**

*Productive Learning* in Vocational Training was offered for students with special needs who studied in a decorator (builder) class. The group of 14 students started with the 'orientation phase'. During the period of six weeks the learners went to enterprises in the construction sector to look around. They watched job interviews and went on excursions. They had individual conversations with teachers, filled questionnaires and forms to participate in the project. The aim of this period was to give the students the possibility to learn more about themselves, about their personal skills and to make plans for their future career.

During the implementation period and according to the conception of the project, the learners were learning by working in construction enterprises. From the beginning of the school year agreements for the participation in *Productive Learning* have been signed.

The major part of the learners had found the enterprises by themselves, while others needed help from the teachers. During the implementation of this activity, teachers have visited the learners at their workplaces. They have prepared theoretical exercises according to the type of the learners work and their capabilities. Forms of the employers assessment which have reflected the learners capabilities and progress also have been prepared. When performing individual tasks, the learners interacted with mentors, interested in a variety of technologies. The work done by PowerPoint has been sent to the teacher via internet. The teacher read and assessed each task individually, according to the capabilities of each learn-

er. The learners were very pleased to be participating in the project and enjoyed the different way of learning.

### **Obstacles that we have faced**

Clearer legal regulation regarding the employers involvement into vocational training is needed in Lithuania. It was difficult to arrange the learning schedule according to the learning plans and the needs of employers. Therefore the schedule has been changed a few times. Learning has been continued from September to December. In January and February the learners have been learning in school. It was planned to have only 'communication group' meetings at school, however, heads of the school decided differently. The meetings of the 'communication group' were held on Fridays for six lessons. For this reason meetings of 'communication group' have not been convened for a while and the teachers could meet the learners only in the evenings after their work.

The presentations of the learners results have not been made as it was foreseen in the conception of the project. A few learners did not have good IT skills, so it was difficult for them to do exercises and they needed more help. The specific of work in enterprises was not always in accordance to the learning plans. The learners had to work with installation of pile foundations or to clean the environment of the enterprises, or even to fulfil hard tasks, that are not included in the learning plans. Due to lack of time resources the teachers could not assess the learners capabilities and progress regularly all the time. The learning plans should be more flexible.

### **Kedainiai Adult and Youth Education Centre (AYEC)**

At Kedainiai Adult and Youth Education Center almost all existing classes were interested in the idea to study in practical places. For the *Productive Learning* project the young adult school leavers were chosen. The students had the idea that *Productive Learning* could help them to pass final school leaving examinations with better results after integrating *Productive Learning* in school subjects. Secondly the students believed that they could broaden their mind, develop new skills and try different professions.

Students at AYEC were mostly with low learning motivation, poor economic living conditions, low self-confidence and most of them were very interested in participating in *Productive Learning*.

**The curriculum in *Productive Learning* at AYEC** was connected to the general education. The main difference was individual learning and counselling, including dealing with exercises, tasks chosen by the students themselves. The Centre works in two semesters and the practi-

cal tasks were integrated and the results were summed with general subjects (English in Practice→English, History in Practice→History, and Law basics in Practice→Law basics).

The lessons were organized according to the real timetable, but *Productive Learning* students went to their practice places every Thursday from 13.50 to 17.05 instead of going to the Centre

The '**communication group**' took place once in a week according to the timetable. Teachers invited all students of the *Productive Learning* class to share their ideas, thoughts, experiences, problems with each other, try to find solutions, help and advice.

**Individual counselling** took place in the library, reading room, classrooms or at practical places. During the individual counselling at practical places teachers, students and mentors talked about the learning progress and also attendance problems. They discussed tasks and also behaviour problems. If the individual counselling took place in one of the school places, only teachers and students talked to each other. In that case they talked about problems and good things regarding to the learning at practice places. The students also gave the teacher more information about the practical places. When they talked one to one, they had an opportunity to be more open and to tell much more details to the teacher. Apart from that the students got the possibility to choose the best time for them. At the end of the studies mentors at the enterprises or other practical places were asked to complete a questionnaire about each student, his/her experience, skills and participation.

To **summarise**, it can be said that

- our students became more motivated in learning.
- the Centre's programme seemed more attractive to students. The students hoped that practice could help them to find a future job.
- Even mentors noticed that almost all students gained better personal skills (time management, responsibility, communication), academic and professional skills.

But we also met some problems.

- Teachers said that *Productive Learning* was more difficult to implement with adults.
- Mentors were always very busy and tried to avoid paper work (feedback, evaluation, etc.).
- Teachers were not very happy with additional work by preparing tasks.
- The administrators were not glad to adapt the timetable.
- Some students wanted to get more practical work in practice places, not only observing.

## Questions for self-reflection

Dear educators,

we hope, that these information helps you to develop your own practice in *Productive Learning* in vocational education. The following questions should inspire you to think about the realization!

Which opportunities can you see in order to implement the ideas of *Productive Learning* in vocational education?

Where can you envisage obstacles and challenges for the implementation of *Productive Learning* in vocational education?

Imagine which spectrum of activities and topics of a vocational field (for example one you are very familiar with) could derive from experiences?



Space for your notes

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