



Report on IPLE's 24th International Seminar in Rostock, November 2012

“Reflective learning – development of competencies: How to work with a portfolio in *Productive Learning*”

1st day: Day of orientation

After a welcome to the 17 participants from Lithuania, Germany and Finland and an introduction into the structure of the day participants had a “silent dialogue” with a partner to get to know each other. Afterwards they presented what they found out about their partners to the group.

An overview of the seminar program and the different venues was given and participants had an exchange about their experiences with *Productive Learning*. It became clear that some of the participants have just got started with a project while others had already long experiences with *Productive Learning*. The view on which aspects of *Productive Learning* – development of personality, participation of participants, learning from practical activities, vocational orientation – are most important differed within the group. The



„talking „silently“



Exchange about experiences and different views on *Productive Learning*

participants agreed that a distinction between the aspects could not easily be made; as they all contribute to the realization of the concept of *Productive Learning*. Most participants stated that from their point of view *Productive Learning* is a good program for a wide variety of students, which should be offered along other options. The public view on *Productive Learning* should be improved.

At the end of the morning session the participants took part in an activity – “FREEDOM” – from the Betzavta set of activities (developed from the Jerusalem based ADAM Institute) which allows immediate experiences in a group, reflections on the pursue of individual needs in a group and on different views of different



Preparations for the “Freedom activity”

persons on the same situation.



Impressions from the „Freedom activity“



In the afternoon students of *Productive Learning* projects in Rostock offered a “sight-seeing tour” through the city of Rostock to allow participants to have a look on the host city through the eyes of their young inhabitants. In a flash light on this activity participants appreciated the involvement of and encounter with students of *Productive Learning* projects a lot.



Sightseeing Rostock through PL-students



Introduction into the portfolio work

At the end of the day Prof. Häcker from the University of Rostock gave an input lecture on the development of the portfolio idea, the different ways it might be used in the pedagogic practice and key aspects – as there are: reflection, communication, demonstration, participation and transparency – of the work with a portfolio.



Impressions from the Welcome Dinner



2nd day: Reflection of learning experiences

During the second day of the seminar the participants explored personal meaningful experiences in their own practice and prepared their own portfolios through a series of guided activities (“Basic Activity”):

- **making a choice:** describing up to three personal meaningful experiences and exchange about these experiences with two partners to focus on one important experience,
- **reflection:** reflecting on and describing the core of the chosen experience and exchange with partners,
- **documentation:** production of a “piece of evidence” to visualize the content of the experience and of an accompanying letter.



Getting started for the 2nd day

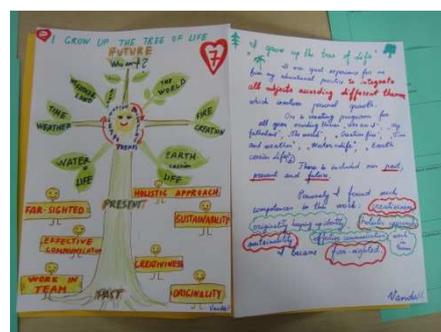


Exchanging about experiences, reflecting on and describing experiences



Working one's own portfolio

Afterwards participants displayed their portfolios and gave written feedbacks to chosen portfolios of their fellow participants in a “reading room”.



Examples of the portfolio work developed during the seminar



The „reading room“

It was discussed if the exploration of “personal meaningful experiences” as well in the seminar as in dialogue with students could be somehow a psychological activity which may go too deep into the soul of the one who makes the portfolio. It was communicated that the one who designs his or her portfolio remains the “owner” of the portfolio, meaning that he or she has the right to decide on the topic of the chosen experience and the deepness of the personal exposure. In this way “learning dairies” differ from portfolio. Portfolios are designed for the communication with other people, were learning dairies are addressed to the writer of the diary and remain closed.

In addition to the work on the portfolio preparations for the school visits during the third day were made. Participants could choose between

- a participation in the communication group of the *PL* project at the Hundertwasser Gesamtschule (Rostock) ,
- accompanying educators of the *PL* project at the Schulcampus Rostock Evershagen at their visits of students at their practical places and taking part in the individual counselling (this offer was not chosen by the participants),
- an introduction into the new *HEE*-project (Acting – Exploring – Discovering) at the BALTIC-school in Rostock-Toitenwinkel and the visit of some learning groups.

3rd day: Day of school visits and search for qualities in competence portfolios

School-Visit: BALTIC School

The coordinator of the *HEE* project gave an introduction into the activities of the students within the project and how the concept is embedded within the concept and program of the school. The project allows students of lower grades to work according to the *PL*-concept on one day of the school week. The participants were impressed by the variety of student activities, their self governance, their participation in the design of the daily school live and their participation in community activities.



An introduction into the HEE-project at BALTIC -school

School-Visit: *Productive Learning* at Hunderwasser Schule



Listening to students' presentations

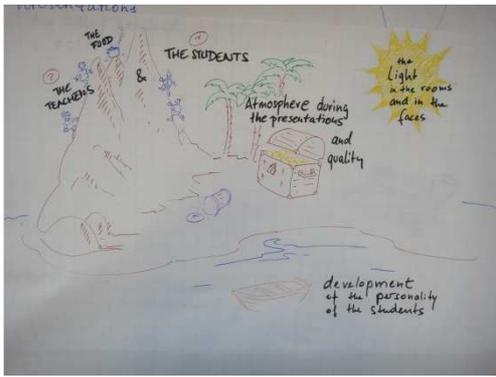
While some participants took part in the communication group and followed the presentation of students of their individual productive tasks (*SPA*) others took part in a guided tour by *Productive Learning* students through the school and used this opportunity for an exchange with the students about their school career before *Productive Learning* and their experiences in this new learning group. Afterwards they switched the groups.

The seminar participants vividly followed the reports of the students and contributed with questions and feedbacks to their presentations. All were impressed by the self-confidence of the students and their open-mindedness towards the guests from the International Seminar.

In the afternoon the different groups reflected on what they have experienced during the visits and presented their reflections to the seminar.



Exchange about experiences and impressions during the school visit



Some examples of the visualisation of the outcome of the exchange about the school visits

In preparation to the school visit in Bad Doberan the next day, where the seminar was about to meet students, who are involved in the portfolio work, an introduction into the development of the competence portfolio with the *PL*-project in Bad Doberan was given. Participants could have a look into one of the portfolios of a former student in that project. In a “search for qualities” participants could experience that each one sees different qualities in the same work as each one views on the portfolio through his or her eyes.

4th day: Visit of the PL-project in Bad Doberan, “Schule am Kamp”

The educators of the *PL*-project in Bad Doberan – Antje Stropahl and Anke Weymann – gave a short introduction into the development of the portfolio project at Bad Doberan and the procedure of the “reading room” and of the “reader’s feedback”. In three rounds of individual encounters students presented their competence portfolios to the seminar participants, afterwards the seminar participants gave their written feedbacks to the students.



Students from the PL-project in Bad Doberan presenting their portfolios to seminar participants

After the encounter with the portfolio work of the students and the students themselves the seminar participants pointed out, that they were impressed by the ability of the students to identify, present and exchange about personal meaningful experiences. They were amazed by the desire and ability of some of the students to communicate in English with the international guests. Participants stated that they got a deeper knowledge of the meaning, possibilities and value of this portfolio work.



Seminar participants gave their feedbacks to the students' portfolios

In a discussion the educators of the project pointed out that the self-confidence which students could develop in real life experiences at their practical placements forms the basement of this kind of portfolio work. These activities enable the students to discover, show and further develop their competences. After acknowledging their competences in real life experiences students come to the point that they want to reflect on their learning and express these experiences in a way shown in the competence-portfolios.

In an evaluation of the seminar the participants appreciated the practical activities and the encounter with students a lot. Especially the activities could be used in their everyday practice. The participants from Lithuania stated, that they got a clearer picture of what is *PL* about in daily practice which was helpful for them for the design of their projects. It was of high value for them to visit four different schools with *PL*- or *HEE*-projects in just four days.

Participants also remarked that the actual work with a portfolio became sharper to them, but they would need time to adjust this work to their needs in their particular projects. It would be difficult and a special task for them to convince their colleagues of this work as those have not experienced the merits of the portfolio work.

Some of the participants pointed out that sometimes the theoretical aspects of the development of the portfolio idea were not really helpful for them while others stated that they needed a theoretical background for their actual work. They gave some hints how the time management of the seminar would have been more effective for them. Some also criticised, that seminar days were too full with content as they wanted to have more time to explore the region.

All participants appreciated a lot the hospitality they have experienced during their visits of the different projects and thanked the educators and students involved. The provided settings contributed to an atmosphere of openness and exchange between the participants during the seminar.



The participants appreciated the warm welcome they received at all projects visited during the seminar.



Saying farewell to the participants from Lithuania