

Berlin, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013

## Productive Learning in general education

### Minutes of the international Comenius seminar “Productive Learning in general education” from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2013 in Berlin

Participants:

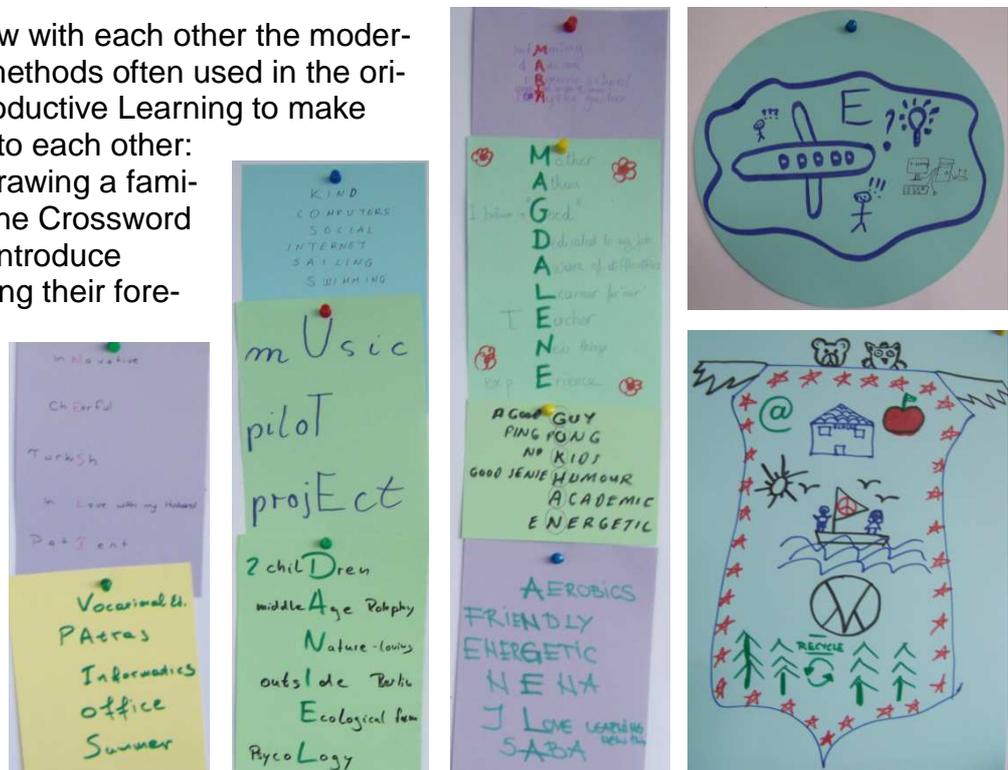
Angela Nenovska (Macedonia), Konstantinos Mathiopoulos, Magdalene Vlami, Maria Hita, Vaios Papaioannou (Greece), Gokhan and Neslihan Omur (UK), Ute Ohme (Germany/RSA).

Moderation: Daniel Guzman, Heike Borkenhagen, Hildurg Freyrik, Sabine Liedtke

#### Monday 11<sup>th</sup> of March

After the welcoming the moderator Daniel Guzmán introduced the facilitators of the seminar week, the seminar’s structure and the places to visit on the following days: Wolfgang-Borchert School, 9<sup>th</sup> Integrated Secondary School and the practical placement of a student in the furniture store “Möbel Kraft”.

In order to get to know with each other the moderator suggested two methods often used in the orientation period of Productive Learning to make students acquainted to each other: “Crosswords” and “Drawing a family coat of arms”<sup>1</sup>. In the Crossword method participants introduce themselves by crossing their forename with fitting characteristics or adjectives. Drawing the family coat of arms a small group has to find similarities between the group members and to give them a creative expression. Every product was presented to the whole group.



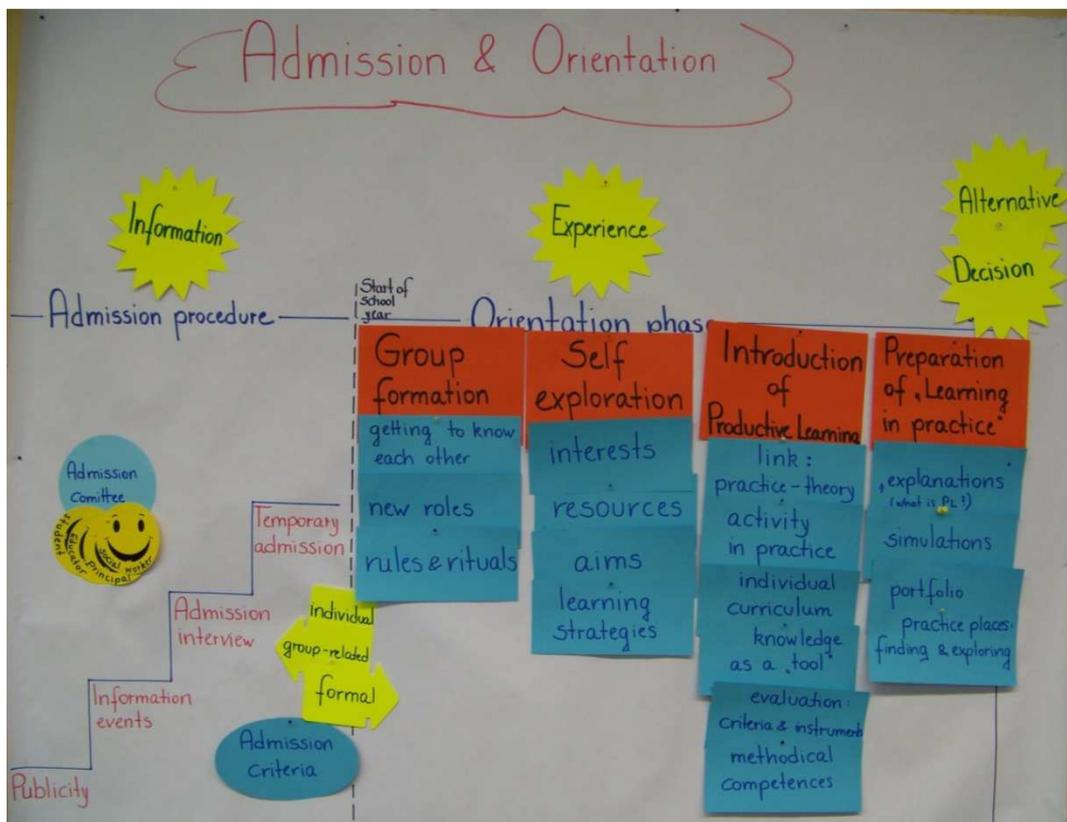
<sup>1</sup> The methods are included to a method folder participants received.

In the following seminar part some participants got the opportunity to present impressions of their work and country due to their personal presentations. These presentations had been continued on Friday. To the end of the forenoon Heike Borkenhagen, director of the institute, welcomed the participants on behalf of IPLE, introduced the *International Network of Productive Schools (INEPS)* and the basic idea of *Productive Learning* and its history and development from 1983 to 2013.

In the afternoon the participants were guided to the first school visit in the Northeast of Berlin to the Wolfgang-Borchert School in the district Spandau. The headmaster Anja Tempelhoff and the educators Sylvia Agotz and Achim Böker welcomed the participants in their school and invited them to a talk with students about their personal way to *Productive Learning* and their first weeks in *PL* during the *Orientation Period*.



After this first-hand exchange the moderator gave an introduction into the concept of the phase of admission and orientation within *Productive Learning*.



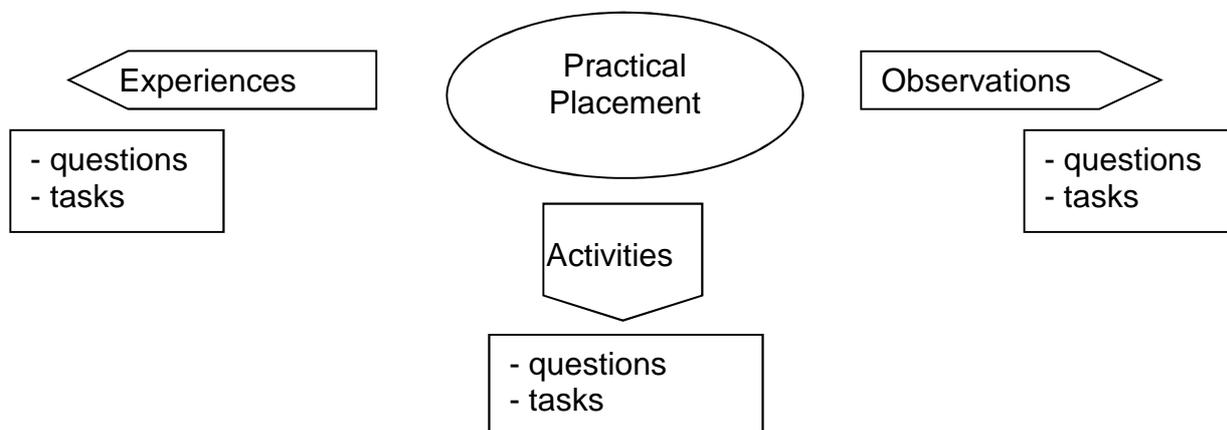
The admission phase is divided into two parts: the admission procedure and the orientation phase which starts with the beginning of the school year, taking six weeks. Admission criteria are developed by the admission committee: formal criteria (criteria of the public authority), individual criteria (criteria, which are based on the education principles of PL, e.g. sufficient independence, responsibility, learning interests etc.) and group-related criteria. During the admission procedure containing (including?) activities of promotion and information about *Productive Learning* for possible participants a group of applicants is composed, which will be invited to the orientation period. After the orientation phase student and teacher decide together if Productive Learning is the right way for the student or not.

## Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> of March

On Tuesday morning the moderator Sabine Liedtke guided the group to a second school visit in the Southwestern district of Berlin to the *Productive Learning* project of the 9<sup>th</sup> Integrated Secondary School. There the participants got an insight into German lessons of 9<sup>th</sup> graders first, led by Hildburg Freynik, teacher of a 10<sup>th</sup> graders group. After this lesson they had the opportunity to take part in the *Communication Group* lessons of Ronald Bachmann – teacher of a 9<sup>th</sup> graders group - for some discussions with the students and the teacher about their practical places and the review of the school year. In the end the group took part on delivery of trimester certifications.

In the afternoon Sabine Liedtke explained the meaning of *Learning in Practice* within *PL* due to a PowerPoint presentation. The main part of the students experience is the activity in practice. They have to include themselves into a real-life situation and to interact with members of the different self-chosen companies or institutions where they take part for 3 to 4 months. These activities in practice shall lead the students to situations which challenge them, like situations where they need certain knowledge or abilities, where they have to follow certain rules and sequences, where they see behind the curtain of the surface of activity. These *Productive Situations* shall be the starting points of learning processes. Students shall develop questions and answer these in order to “*Open-up the Productive Situations*”. This part of learning is like an exploration journey and the students are counseled to behave like explorers: walking open-eyed, asking, trying out, making theories, taking notes and examples and present them to the others of their group. They shall re-discover their curiosity for connections and relations of real-life situations and their meanings.

In an exercise the participants tried to imagine a practical situation in a furniture store – as planned for the visit of a practical placement for the next day – and to find possible learning situations and questions for this situation.



Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> of March

The third seminar day began with a visit to Angelique's practical placement in the furniture store "Möbel Kraft". Angelique, a student of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, welcomed the participants together with her teacher Hildburg Freynik. For the student it was very important that a vocational training was already offered to her.

In a discussion with the manager of the store and his staff manager the participants got a lot of information about the PL-Learning in practice from the point of view of firms and the guidelines of the staff management at "Möbel Kraft". The store manager explained that *Productive Learning* is a very good learning approach because it prepares students for tasks they have to face after finishing school. He confirmed that the students get a good insight into the company within a three month term of *Learning in Practice* offering a lot of possibilities to involve the students in different processes and to assess the student's abilities and interest for this field of work. He pointed out that the combination of working and learning tasks at the same time effects a quality of interest and awareness of the students, that is not reachable in ordinary two-week work experiences of regular schools.

During the visit Angelique presents her latest practical task: to decorate a table in the boutique section that emerge a sense of spring to the costumers. In addition she had to calculate costs and reflect upon colors for her school tasks.



In the afternoon the groups meet at *IPLE* for the seminar part “How to develop Individual Curricula”, moderated by Hildburg Freynik and Daniel Guzmán. Hildburg Freynik explained which tasks students have to achieve besides their practice. These tasks are individual depending on the practical situation and the student’s interests. In the field of exploration every student has to find out answers concerning nine exploration questions discovering specific aspects, materials or tools of their practical situation. They are supported by the weekly individual counseling. Angelique for instance researched as one of these questions about candles, its fabrication and its history, because they are selling candles in the boutique of Möbel Kraft. Although students have to produce a photo-documentation with pictures and written text, they have to draw a mind-map of everything connected to their practical placement, they have to design a documentation folder, which contents their application form, their reasons for choosing this practice, a thank you letter, a reflection of their development and learning processes and other tasks. In addition they have to choose an individual learning-site in the city to present it to the others.

Depending on the different kinds of practice, the different interests of the students, the different needs for their future plans and the different levels of individual skills and knowledge, the learning tasks appear to be very different in topics, subject relations and expected standard: Every student has his or her *Individual Curriculum*. Hildburg Freynik reported that it is a hard process to direct the students from their old pupil’s role to the attitude of a *PL*- student, and it will not work in every case.

Hildburg Freynik described that it is very important to understand *PL* and the *Individual Counseling* in a holistic way. At first the students should get an idea why they should learn. The teacher’s task is to give some inspiration and open the student’s mind; it’s necessary to prepare successes for the students, for instance to give feedback and advises to improve the outcome, to give courage, to listen to private problems with friends or family, or to help solving sorrows and trouble.



## Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> of March

The Thursday morning began with an offer for an exploration of Berlin’s possible learning sites due to a guided tour. In the afternoon the participants met in the 9<sup>th</sup> Integrated Secondary School to take part in an individual counseling process.

In the beginning the 10<sup>th</sup> graders welcomed the group in their communication group. Every student introduced himself in English and presented briefly their practical placement and their favorite tasks. There was for instance Claudio who liked to work with wood and learned in a carpenter's shop. He hoped to get an offer of vocational training there; one of his classmates was Antonia who worked with handicapped people from the ages of 5 to 19 years in an assisted living arrangement. The guests introduced themselves to the students and in the following there was a discussion about the students' view on *PL*; the seminar participants asked for instance about the choice of subjects in *PL*, the matter that there are only these three teachers or if there is something the students want to change or improve within *PL*. The students pointed out that they have a very good relationship to their teachers, even if they are sometimes very strictly. They suggested some improvements concerning the number of tasks or the process of their completion and the teacher took notes in order to prove the suggestions.

When the lesson was finished one student (Lisa) stayed for her individual counseling. She had agreed that the guests take part in the counseling session. The participants got different observation tasks for the subsequent discussion. Her teacher instructed that the individual counseling has different aspects: Lisa's situation in her practical placement, a flower shop, will be one part, her tasks another, furthermore she is preparing for examination so there would be some reflections about this topic, too.

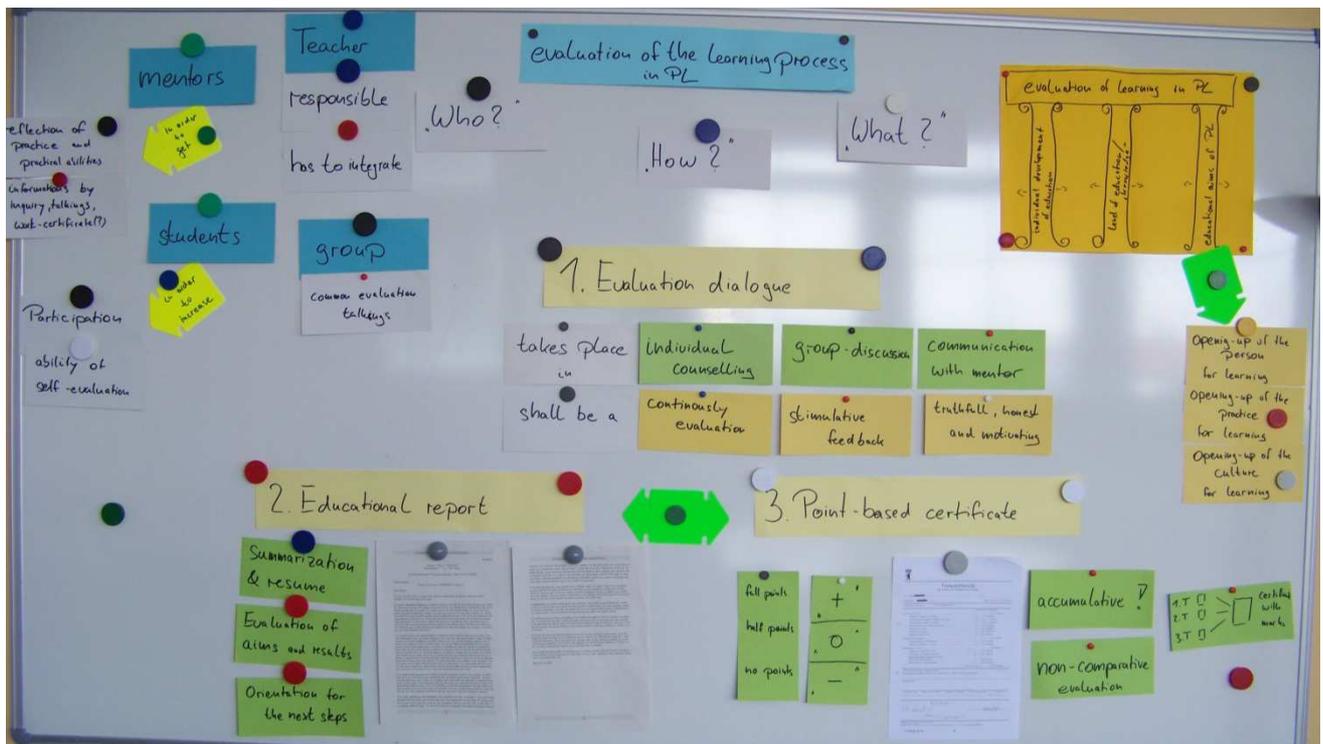
In the discussion after the counseling session the participants gave some feedback to the teacher depending on the observation tasks the teacher asked for (culture of discussion, influence and manipulation, methods and questioning, non-verbal communication). Furthermore they reflected upon the counseling situation in general, for them it has been a very vivid example of working individually with the students; they got an impression of asking and answering, about the student's duties and what could be improved; they got insights in the students troubles and fears and how the teacher tried to handle it, balancing different future prospects and requiring efforts to reach them. Everyone was touched by the intensity of this counseling situation.

## Friday 15<sup>th</sup> of March

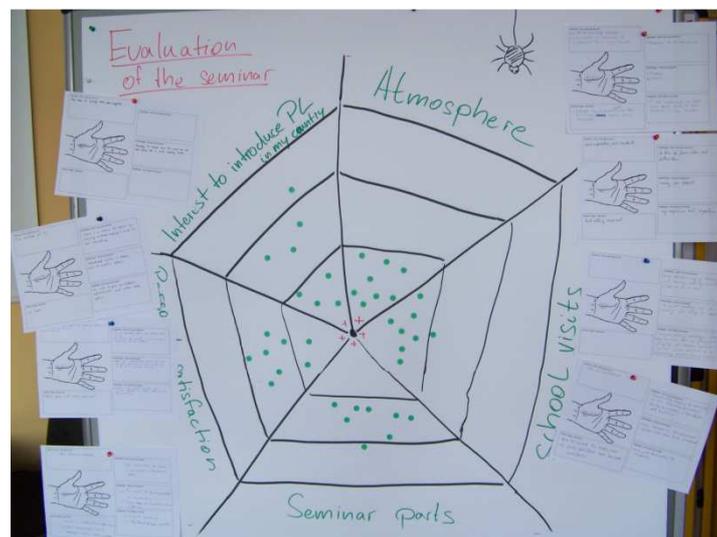
The last seminar day started with a presentation about the evaluation of the educational processes in *Productive Learning*. Daniel Guzmán explained that the evaluation process bases on three main aspects: the individual process of learning, the achievements of the students to the demands of the general curriculum and to the PL-educational aims. The importance of every aspect varies in dependence of the individual learning process and the individual situation.

The evaluation mainly depends on the dialogue between student and teacher and is summarized every trimester in an educational report and a corresponding point-based certificate. The evaluation dialogue intends to motivate and stimulate the student's efforts, to give an honest and personal feedback, and to support truthful and continuous self-evaluation of the student.

The teachers are by law responsible for the evaluation, to have better information they integrate students, mentors and the whole group in this process on demand. But for a second purpose to increase the ability of self-evaluation the teachers integrate the students' evaluation as a regular part evaluation of the learning process.



The seminar was concluded by two different kinds of feedback: a spider's web for a rating of different aspects and a "hand-evaluation" for a more personal feedback. The participants appreciated especially the atmosphere of the seminar and the "living examples" of PL during the school visits. They pointed out in their personal feedback that they got new ideas and inspiration related to the connection of theory and practice and the majority considered to introduce *PL* or some of its methods in their schools or classes



#### Annexes:

Material provided during the seminar:

- Orientation period in *Productive Learning* – a choice of methods and material
- Basic aspects and examples for the student's *Learning in Practice*
- The new professional understanding of oneself as *PL* educator
- Contact list of the participants