

PBL academy – second newsletter

Dear colleagues

Hereby the second newsletter from the PBL-academy, and an opportunity to wish everyone a happy (and hopefully sunny) summer vacation. This has been a very busy spring for the PBL academy, and we are thankful for the requests for collaborations, support, suggestions for seminars, ideas for tasks and projects that we have received, and it is great to work with so many people across the university.

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Seminar on PBL and Interdisciplinarity – held 29 March 2012

The seminar on PBL and Interdisciplinarity took place in Nyhavnsgade 14 (Friis) on the 29 of March 2012. The program for the day was:

- Introduction to the idea of a “Solution Hub” (Mikael Vetner) – slides will be available on www.pbl.aau.dk
- Working with and supervising students who do interdisciplinary work – based on experiences from Techno Anthropology (Margit Saltofte)

The presentations were around 30 minutes, and followed by discussions. Both presentations spurred interesting discussions on interdisciplinarity, how to design for interdisciplinary work, and how to supervise students working within an interdisciplinary programme (Techno Anthropology). This will also be a particular challenge of the Solution Hub initiative, and the seminar opened up for valuable input from the participants, which can be used in the further process of designing the Solution Hub Event. For more information about the solution hub we refer to previous newsletter, and the slides from Mikael Vetner (that will be made available).

The seminar was attended by approximately 25 participants, and we would like to thank you all for your vivid engagement during the seminar; and the presenters in particular for their interesting contributions.

Seminar on PBL and Creative Processes – held 23 May 2012

The seminar on PBL and Creative Processes took place 23 May in Toldboden and after lunch in the Utzon Center. The seminar was organised in a collaboration between the PBL Academy, researchers from Architecture, Design and Media Technology; Art and Technology; The Utzon Center, and from Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge UK.

The program featured a combination of conceptual, theoretical contributions and presentation of students' project work, where students were engaged in design, construction and creative processes:

- 09.00-09.15 Introduction to the seminar/symposium by Ole Pihl and Thomas Ryberg
- 09.15-09.30 Presentation by Adrian Carter – On the Utzon paradigm and PBL –
on tensions between individual creativity and the collective
- 09.30-09.45 Project presentation from 2. sem. students. (Nadiim Nafei, Nikolaj Kristensen)
- 09.45-10.00 Presentation from 4. sem. students. (Tine Brandstrup, Mikkel Møltoft)
- 10.00-10.15 Presentation of students from the master program. (Pernille Skjødt Møller)
- 10.15-10.45 Discussion of the presented projects
- 10.45-11.00 Short break
- 11.00-11.30 Presentation by Betty Melgaard and Jacob Sabra, Art and technology
- 11.30-12.00 The dialogical Imagination Presentation by Andrew Armitage
- 12.00-12.30 Open discussion of the presentation

The full program and description of the day [can be found online](#).

The seminar was very interesting, and the various presentations gave us a good insight into what 'problems' might be, and how they may look different and be addressed differently from various disciplinary backgrounds (from designing bus stops and buildings to creating aiding tools for mechanics). We had good discussions on the notion of problems, and whether we are solving problems or asking questions; or maybe if we are (or should be) creating problems/trouble. The notion of conscientization presented by Andrew Armitage gave ample theoretical background to discussing such questions and highlighted ideals such as dialogue, problematisation and interventions/action in the world that surrounds us. Likewise, there were vibrant discussions of the tensions between the individual and collective and how we might handle tensions between individual inspiration, experience and ideas, and then the group as a facilitator/catalyst for those ideas or as an inhibitor for individual creativity.

All of these discussions carried on into the afternoon, where we also discussed the idea of creating a proposal for a special issue on PBL and Creativity. This is something that Ole Verner Pihl, Andrew Armitage and Thomas Ryberg will continue working on.

The seminar was attended by approximately 25 people and we would like to thank you all for your participation in the seminar; and a particular thank to the presenters for providing us with very interesting insights and topics for discussion.

Upcoming seminars on PBL

We are currently working on a number of ideas for seminars in the autumn, although nothing has yet been settled. We are thinking about holding a seminar on 'online or blended PBL', which we envision more as a seminar for exchanging experiences. There are a number of modules and master programmes (e.g. [Master in ICT and Learning](#), [Master in Problem Based Learning](#) and many more) that are founded on the Aalborg PBL model, feature project work and an interplay between online and 'offline' engagements. We were thinking it might be interesting to get participants from the different programmes together to present their organisation of learning, support of PBL, use of ICTs etc. which could hold value to those running a programme, and for those thinking about doing so.

Equally, we are considering some more research oriented seminars on e.g. how to start doing research into PBL and one's own practice. There are a number of methods and approaches within e.g. educational studies that might be interesting also for researchers within other areas.

We are also very open to suggestions! If you, or your research group, have ideas for particular aspects of PBL, which you think could have wider interest, do let us know, as we are happy to act as sparring partners, co-developers/co-organisers. We are glad to help with links to other people interested in the same aspects and in calling for wider participation.

Journal of PBL in higher education (PBLHE)

As we wrote in our previous newsletter, we are currently in the process of establishing a journal titled "Journal of PBL in Higher Education". This work is progressing fast. We have established an editorial board and sent out a call for papers. We hope you were all aware of the Call for Papers that was circulated in the spring (you can read it [here](#)). We have received great worldwide and national response to the call, and a good number of abstracts for papers have been handed in after the call. We are currently responding to authors of abstracts and encouraging them to submit full papers for peer review by November 1st.

In line with the AAU Open Access Policy and the recent signing of the Berlin Declaration, the journal is an Open Access journal. The notion of Open Access is getting increased attention internationally as well as nationally and the Danish Public Funded Research Councils now have an Open Access policy, and it seems there will be a national policy very, very soon.

Also, it should be mentioned that Aalborg University Library have now setup their own Open Journal System server, which means that the PBLHE journal will be moving to a new address:

<http://ojs.aub.aau.dk/index.php/pbl/index>

We once again like to thank AUB (Nils Thidemann and Maria O. Madsen) for their help and support with the Open Journal System and many other issues related to establishing a journal. We are particularly indebted to Erik de Graaf and Anette Kolmos for sharing their experiences from the Journal of PBL in Engineering Education, circulating the call to the [UNESCO chair's](#) international mailing list, and for their contributions as part of the editorial board.

PBL courses for new employees

Last October/November the PBL academy together with [Learning Lab](#) and the UNESCO chair held seminars on PBL for new employees. This semester (and the coming semesters) there will also be a number of PBL courses available for new employees. More information will be available in August, so this is just a brief message to say that something will be happening.

Mapping of PBL resources

Together with the HR-department we are currently in the process of trying to map PBL resources and people across AAU. This is a small part of the University's action plan on improving the learning environment (studiemiljøet) at Aalborg University. We are interested in getting in touch with those people who are teaching and supporting students in learning about PBL, and we are interested in learning more about theories, methods, practices, publications and tools that the students are provided with (e.g. for

group formation, problem formulation, team building, conflict management and so on). Our hope is that we will be able to develop a platform for the sharing of experiences, practices and tools among PBL researchers, teachers, students and practitioners regarding e.g. methods and literature on conflict management or inputs on how group formation processes can best be facilitated. We will be sending out letters to the study boards regarding this, but if you feel you have something to contribute with, please feel free to contact us

Resources and links

We are currently in the process of establishing a links and resources site on www.pbl.aau.dk. We know there are many great resources scattered across the AAU (there are official AAU youtube videos about group work, there are resources from the Aalborg University Library (e.g. SWIM), there is the SLP-handbook, the UNESCO chair site with resources and so on). We are happy to provide links to all of these great sources and are continuously trying to maintain an updated site on AAU PBL resources. Therefore, if you feel you have something to add, then please feel free to contact us.

PBL ambassadors

We are working on establishing a network or team of PBL ambassadors. For example we are currently working with AAU on Demand and the Creative Platform on setting up a two-day program for High Schools where students can get a little bit of experience with the Aalborg PBL model (although in a very condensed format). In that way the AAU students also become PBL ambassadors. We are, however, also very interested in getting in touch with employees at any level, who might be interested in acting as 'supervisors' or 'lecturers' during such events. Likewise, if you should be interested in presenting PBL to international guests, students or in other context, we would be happy to hear from you, as it would be very useful to have a network of PBL interested researchers and practitioners which can act as PBL ambassadors.

New Secretary

Towards the end of this newsletter we should like to thank Morten Mathiasen Andersen for his great and hard work for the Academy. Morten did a wonderful job as secretary for the academy, but since January/February he became too busy with other things as well, and is already on reduced time. Morten is also supporting the work in the UNESCO chair, and it was too much doing both. But thank you very much, Morten, for your great work!

We are, however, also very happy to welcome Jane Bak Andersen (jba@learning.aau.dk) as our new secretary. Jane has been with us since May and is doing a wonderful job. So we are very happy to welcome and introduce Jane, who is also working as a secretary in Learning Lab.

Best wishes from the PBL academy management board and we wish you all a sunny and relaxing summer

Thomas Ryberg, Lars Bo Henriksen, Diana Stentoft, Erik Laursen and Jane Bak Andersen