

**ASEM-LLL Research Network 2: Workplace Learning
Network Workshop 2011, 11 – 13 July 2011, Innsbruck**

Summary Report

This year's Network Meeting brought together 19 participants from 12 countries, including four invited speakers from beyond the network membership. The group spent three intensive and enjoyable days together on the Tyrolean Alps above Innsbruck and climbed right to the top of the *Nordkette* at Hafelekar – an unforgettable experience for everyone.¹

The programme included further national reports from Hungary (Gábor Erdei), Japan (Nanae Ibuchi and Kenji Hirata), Malaysia (Ruhizan Yasin) and Thailand (Patcharawalai Wongboonsin) on the findings of the RN2 workplace learning survey² together with interim findings with respect to the comparative analysis of the survey's findings (led by Lynne Chisholm and Kathrin Helling from Austria and Theo van Dellen from The Netherlands).

Karen Evans (UK) set out the main issues addressed in the new *Handbook of Workplace Learning* (Sage, 2010) which she has co-edited, and Kathrin Helling introduced the high-end *Flashmeeting* video conferencing tool that the network will be using in future to hold virtual meetings from time to time. The Open University in the UK is running a research project on communication patterns in virtual meetings, and it agreed to accept RN2 as one of its 'research subjects'.

Carol Costley from Middlesex University³ in the UK presented the main features of work-based learning in higher education (in distinction to learning at, in and through work), and Annette Ostendorf from the School of Management at the University of Innsbruck⁴ discussed the findings of a small-scale qualitative study about informal learning in the workplace that is generated through the relationships between interns (those undertaking a period of work experience as part of their education and training) and those with whom they interact in the workplace. This linked up well with a study presented by Valérie Cohen-Scali (France) that explored the ways in which career commitment amongst young adults in vocational higher education is connected with personal-professional relations with their mentors, and how gender might be implicated in these processes. Wolfgang Weber from the Institute of Psychology at the University of Innsbruck⁵ gave a report on the work of the ODEM project, which is trying to discover and explain how and why some types of organisations display more (or less) democratic working cultures, whereas Jörg Markowitsch (Danube

¹ <http://www.nordkette.com/en/the-mountain-in-summer.html>

² Some of the national reports presented at the ASEM-LLL Hub Conference in Hanoi, December 2010 are already available on the ASEM-LLL network website; some summary contributions are also available in the volume of proceedings from the Hanoi conference. Others will follow in due course.

³ <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/staffdirectory/carol-costley.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.uibk.ac.at/iol/mitarbeiter/ostendorf/> (in German)

⁵ <http://www.uibk.ac.at/psychologie/mitarbeiter/weber/> (in German)

University Krems and 3s Research Lab Vienna)⁶ described work from the EU-FP6 LLL2010 project⁷ that has begun to develop a typology of training cultures which offer more (or less) positive environments for continuing work-related learning.

A collection that draw together the contributions to the workshop will be prepared for publication with Innsbruck University Press in 2012 as the second volume of the network's series (the first volume, *Competence Development as Workplace Learning*, was published in 2007 and is now available for free download on the ASEM-LLL-RN2 website).

The presentations⁸ generated much discussion, setting up a list of themes that the network will consider in the coming months with a view to launching its next joint study:

- Roles and professional development of 'industry educators' (= trainers, supervisors, mentors/counsellors etc. at the workplace)
- Family-company value systems, learning and democratic working organisations
- Gendered learning organisations: cultures, practices and communities of power and recognition
- Affective commitment and active citizenship: the significance of personal development and emotional engagement to company and workplace learning cultures and practices
- Innovation and development: cycles and pathways of polarisation and diffusion in the distribution of learning opportunities and participation in expanding work organisations
- Research paradigms and methods: gaining Ragan's functional equivalence in European-Asian inquiry that takes serious account of cultural difference

The workplace learning survey comparative analysis will continue through to the end of the year, with a Task Force meeting at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok in December 2011 planned to finalise the main lines of interpretation and outcome, in time for full presentation at the next ASEM-LLL-Hub Conference in Copenhagen in April 2012.

Lynne Chisholm

RN2 Coordinator, July 2011



⁶ <http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/universitaet/whois/06082/index.php> (with EN-CV) and <http://www.3s.co.at/3shomepage/en/node/396>.

⁷ http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP6_PROJ&ACTION=D&DOC=1&CAT=PROJ&QUERY=013142a7d244:94a9:57c7088c&RCN=75704

⁸ Powerpoint presentations from the workshop are posted on the ASEM-LLL-RN2 website.