

AAU PBL Academy – Annual Report 2018

Introduction

On the following pages you will find a brief report of the activities and initiatives of the AAU PBL Academy in 2018. The report is intended to provide an overview and thus is not exhaustive. Overall the work of the PBL Academy falls into four categories; contributing towards the realisation of the AAU Strategy Knowledge for the World, running working groups and seminars on issues related to PBL, running Journal of Problem-Based Learning in Higher Education and maintaining a website and intranet offering information and materials on PBL.

The PBL Academy management board is comprised of one representative from each faculty ensuring cross-faculty perspectives in discussions and initiatives. Rasmus Antoft, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences is overall responsible for the Academy.

A brief background of the PBL Academy

The AAU PBL Academy was established in 2011 following an application from the central PBL research environments at the university. The application for a PBL Academy came just after the publication of the first version of the AAU PBL principles in 2010 and the subsequent realisation that PBL was seen and implemented very differently across faculties and educational programmes. It was therefore felt that time had come to strengthen the cross-faculty conversations about PBL, what PBL means to students and staff and that this conversation should be more readily available to all staff at AAU. Fortunately rector and the AAU management agreed with these considerations and since then the PBL Academy has been running annual seminars, organised development projects related to PBL, established Journal of PBL in Higher Education and in recent years also come to play a role in the implementation of the components related to PBL in the AAU Strategy Knowledge for the World. As of 2018 the PBL Academy is a well-integrated structure of AAU and continues to operate with a focus on communication and debate on PBL across AAU departments.

1. Journal of PBL in Higher Education

JPBLHE published two issues in 2018. One was a special issue entitled: “Integrating Academic and Artistic Methodologies within a PBL-environment” with six articles. The other issue was a regular issue with five articles and six cases. Authors of the papers in both issues came from all over the world, including a good portion from Aalborg University. We are very happy that the journal has this balance for two reasons: First, we find that it adds to the credibility and relevance of the journal that researchers from all over the world wish to publish their work in JPBLHE. Second, it is also an indicator of quality that our own researchers want to publish their work in JPBLHE. We see this as indicators of them being proud of the journal. Our reviewers also come from all over the world. Their effort is extremely important to ensure quality. Sometimes it can be a challenge to find reviewers and we are working on ways to improve this. People are busy but one way to show appreciation is that we thank them in the issue in which they have served as reviewer.



During 2018 we changed the platform on which JPBLHE is hosted. It gave some challenges to get to know a new system but the new system has a number of advantages over the old one, so in the end it was worth it. We have for some time discussed the appearance and layout of the journal, but we postponed this until the new system was in place. This is some of the things we wish to work on in the coming year. During 2018 we had an impressive number of downloads of papers, 75461.

2. First year PBL Network

This year the academy hosted two seminars in the first year PBL network. At the first seminar the theme was “Coping with students’ individual challenges in PBL”. In different talks the audience learned about tools and strategies for dealing with students individual challenges in a PBL environment. At the second seminar, the theme was the process of transition from secondary education to AAU. We had invited speakers from different colleges in the region (STX, HTX and HHX) to get a better understanding of the skills and competence of the students that arrive at AAU. More than 30 colleagues from AAU participated in this inspiring afternoon. In 2019, we plan a new seminar on the different designs and structures at first year at AAU. The PBL academy want to thank all colleagues for presenting their work at the seminars.

3. PBL learning objectives in all educations

As part of the strategic work with PBL at AAU all study boards are required to incorporate learning objectives showing how PBL is intended to aid students development during their studies. To assist this work the PBL Academy has during 2018 been invited into the process first delivering a talk on PBL and progression at the kick-off seminar for the process in August and since as facilitators during events organised for educational leaders at AAU. In addition the PBL Academy has developed guidelines on how to organise the working process towards tangible PBL learning objectives relevant to each education yet simultaneously meeting the overall AAU PBL principles. The work of supporting this important process will continue in 2019.

4. Communication about PBL at AAU

Besides sharing information on the seminars and on the webpage, the PBL Academy has initiated an effort to increase the communication of our AAU PBL principles. The idea is to make a site on the PBL academy homepage, where it is possible to learn more about the 6 principles by getting short video introductions to the concept and features presenting experiences from students and staff in embedding the 6 AAU PBL principles into practice. This communication effort will gradually be developed as well as adjusted to the pace of the coming revision of the PBL principles. As for now we have finalised two scripts explaining about the problem as point of departure for learning and how courses are made to support the project in a problem-based learning environment. At the end of 2018 two films following these scripts are under production.

5. Internal Activities

In 2018, the PBL Academy specifically hosted or contributed to the following activities:

- In January 2018, the PBL Academy hosted a First Year PBL Network seminar on “Coping with students’ individual challenges in PBL”



- In April 2018, the PBL Academy assisted “Studentersamfundet” with texts about PBL for the first-year student handbook (RUS-håndbog) and gave a presentation for the AAU Student Guidance
- In August 2018, the PBL Academy participated in a Kick-off Seminar for AAU education leaders
- In September 2018, the PBL Academy hosted a First Year PBL Network seminar on the process of transition from secondary education to AAU
- In October 2018, the PBL Academy outlined a note with tools / guidelines for implementing progressive learning objectives in all educations
- In November 2018, the PBL Academy gave a presentation at a seminar on progressive learning objectives in curriculums, as well as helped facilitate the debate on the subject
- In December 2018, the PBL Academy hosted a seminar on the understanding of the competencies we often attribute with PBL

The PBL Academy had eleven board meetings in 2018.

6. Looking ahead

Keeping PBL alive and keeping PBL as a well suited approach to higher education in societies characterised by knowledge overload and fast paced changes requires continuous and critical scrutiny of our practices and principles. Yet at the same time we need PBL principles which are shared and firmly anchored across faculties in order for AAU to maintain a position as a university sporting an innovative and student-centred approach to teaching and learning. The AAU PBL Academy therefore has as its primary mission to on the one hand ensure debate and create spaces for sharing of knowledge and experiences of PBL and on the other hand to contribute towards the anchoring of PBL as our institutional approach to learning and teaching. In the coming year we intend to strive towards this mission by keep organising engaging and relevant seminars and activities open to all staff, promote research into PBL through our journal and by supporting the on-going implementation of the AAU Strategy. We will in the year to come have specific focus on PBL in our Master programmes through a development project. A working group has already been set up, and the work is planned to take place during spring 2019, concluding with a final seminar in September 2019. If you hold an interest in the theme and would like to know more about what is going on in the working group, or even might be interested in joining the group, please feel free to contact the Academy.

The PBL Academy is for all staff at AAU and we rely on inputs and experiences from all levels in the organisation. Therefore we look forward to seeing many of you in 2019 as we invent and reinvent what PBL means at AAU.

Members of the PBL Academy:

Diana Stentoft (Chairman)	Erik Laursen	Jette Holgaard	Bettina Dahl Søndergaard	Jacob Davidsen
SUND	SAMF	TECH	ENG	HUM