

“PRAISE” Project

**FINAL REPORT ON VIRTUOUS CIRCLE ACTIVATION
(T.2)**

by INFOP Paris -Turin

1. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Virtuous circles are local structures through which the actors of social work are actively involved in a complex process of actions and ideas stimulated by the project itself. Virtuous circles are composed by professionals (practioners) who aims to have a common training process and shared similar formative needs.

Each virtuous circle is based on the interaction of the members who are able to collaborate with their own experiences and knowledge in order to improve the formative process. Collaboration and cooperative learning are involved during the process, and it is a requirement for the success of the work of each circle.

Another important element that characterizes the circles is the particular emphasis ascribed to the elaboration of the experience, built during years of work or just in a short period of practical training. In both cases, virtuous circles' model aims to conciliate theoretical and practical aspects in social operators' formation.

Virtuous circles were created at the beginning of PRAISE project because is one the main elements to produce case-studies. The creation of the virtuous circles was adapted to the main characteristics of each participant institution following some common ideas:

- Each institution involved in the project act as a leader of the circle organisation the meetings, proposing the calendar, topics, etc.
- Participation of different practitioners in the field of social work and social education are involved in each circle.
- Elaboration of the case studies from the experience of the practitioners involved in the virtuous circle.
- Analysis of the cases with all the participants of the virtuous circle.

The main role of the participants is the production of the case-studies based on their own practice and experience. Each practitioner can select a case or cases according with the main topics of the project.

Cases are based on previous experiences of the participants, has to be authentic, real cases, and it is necessary to describe not only the case (the main problem) but also the intervention and the results achieved during the process.

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

The diversity of the organisations involved is one of the keys of interpretation of the activation system:

Pitesti University (Rumania)
Barcelona University (Spain)
Akurey University (Iceland):

are three universities;

SFEP Turin (Italy)
INFOP Paris (France):

are permanent training institutes for social workers;

Bethel Institute (Germany):
is a private university-style institution (which issues professional diplomas).

These organisations also have internal differences in terms of their objectives and the public they address, based on different interests and local strategies (undoubtedly influenced by the current legislative situation, opportunities on the social “market”, and by the history of the institution in question).

This diversity is not denied, but rather considered as a resource in assisting comparison. At the same time, the shared structure defined for activation places this diversity into context within a shared concept.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The model is based on the methodology of narration, the drawing of narrative documents made by each student which are later analyzed and discussed into local focus groups.

These validated documents will be shared by an ODL platform and enriched by elaborative contributions of experts.

By the analysis of local work group, each partner has identified the local formative needs through a shared scheme and is developing an on line course using the same platform of the documents.

The efforts made by the partners to activate the Virtuous Circles are therefore characterised by the concern of making the various experiences comparable.

The “practice-theory-practice” theoretical model cannot guarantee this comparison without a specific clarification on the tools of selection and analysis of the CVs, which also allows monitoring itself. If the CV is a feedback system, then checking it is also the result of an aware system of feedback (ourness).

Another objective is therefore represented by the need to structure a common language which nonetheless respects the singular nature of experiences and actual programs.

Speaking the same language does not mean everyone thinking the same things. A common structure of comparison for activation of the circles does not standardise the

contents, so much as make them comparable. And the circle, not only metaphorically, is closed (in order to re-open for a new theory-practice experience).

Separating contents and program (then returning afterwards to the contents through interpretation of the actual requirements of each) helps the individual partner and the group to make their experiences communicable.

CONCRET OUTCOMES

	SFEP	Bethel	UdB	INFOP	UoA
Composition (professionals)	1) Social workers of reception care 2) responsible of Services	1) Social workers and social educators from Bielefeld and surrounding area 2) Social workers in Bethel 3) Students	- Social workers - University lecturer and researcher - Social assistant - Social educator - Pedagogues	- Trainers - Experts	1)- Social director of joint service provision: social work, social education and psychology; Independent social work consultant; Hospital social worker; Social worker from Latvia - University lecturer and researcher 2) Social workers and University lecturer
Number of members	1) 30 members 2) 10 members	1) 5-10 members 2) about 8 members 3) 15 members	8 members	5 members	1) 4 members 2) 8 members
Frequency of the meetings	Ranging from two to four per month (starting on December '04)	1) One per month 2) Two per month (starting on November'04) 3) Two per month (starting on January'04)	One per month	One per month	One per month

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Table 3.1 Summary of networks, materials, products, publications, modules, courses, conferences, reports, studies and other concrete outcomes of the project

Please use the appropriate codes as listed in the Annex.

N°	Type of outcome (A codes)	Title of the outcome	Languages (Language codes)	Type of dissemination (C codes)	Quantity (1)	Target audience		Any other comments
						Sector (D codes)	Category (E codes)	
1	A 1	Infop Application of CV in regular training courses for social workers of Infop	FR	C 4	2 (80 participants) 2 (50 participants)	D 6 D8 D9	E 7 E 13 E14	The VC is a formal methodology that our institution has includes in the regular activities based on a training model (praxis – theory – praxis)
2	A4	InFOP Organisation of Documents of learnig experience	FR – UK	C3	50 participants	D 6 D8 D9	E 7 E 13 E14	
3	A5	Infop Reinforcement of working methodology on behalf of the teachers	FR	C4	2 (8 participants)	D6	E7	E7 are the teacher of Infop Organisation
	A2	Infop Infop's analysis about VC activation and the pedagogical references	IT	C2	4	D9	E1	
4	A2	Sfep The welcoming culture	IT	C3 – C 8	1	D 9 – D 13	E 3 – E 4 – E 13	Agreement on work methodology
5	A3	Sfep The welcoming culture	IT	C 3	1	D 9 – D 13	E 3 – E 4- E 14	Agreement on work methodology

6	A12 letter	University of Akureyi Letter to potential participants	EN	C6	1	D5 and D13 Local Authority	E10, E11, E13	Activation
	A2	University of Akureyi Activation Local experience of activating virtuous circles: progress report	EN	C10 Faculty meeting	1	D5	E10 and E4 and E11	Activation
	A12	University of Akureyi Presentation to potential participants in Iceland (Activation)	EN	C3	3	D 5 and D13 Local Authority	E10, E4, E8 and E16 social work practitioners	Activation
	A8	UN Barcelona Directory of institutions of social services.	Catalan	Other (Data Base of the University)	1	D5	E1,E2, E10.	TASK 2
	A12 (Power Point)	UN Barcelona Local Presentations	Catalan	C9 C3	1 2	D5, D13 (social services)	E1, E2, E16 (social educator and social workers)	TASK 2
	A10	UN Barcelona Establishment of the methodology of the analysis of the cases	Catalan	C3 C4	2 1	D13 (social services)	E16 (social educator and social workers)	TASK 2
	A2 A10 A12	Bethel Institut a presentation of our virtuous circle and the methodology in different groups (students, Collegues of the social field) the first case-studie	DE DE/EN	C 10 Flyer C10 Protokoll C3 Conferences C6 email	1 1 3	D4	E4	
	A9 A4 A11	Bethel Institut case studies New networks of students and collegues case studies	DE DE/EN	C6 www./ E-mail C2 Articles C 10 Protokolle C3 Conferences		D4 D11	E1 E4 E16 (social-worker)	

	A1 A2 A4 A5 A8	Bethel Institut - Langugae Acquisition of Children / Supporting Children in the Process of Language Acquisition in Elementary Education						

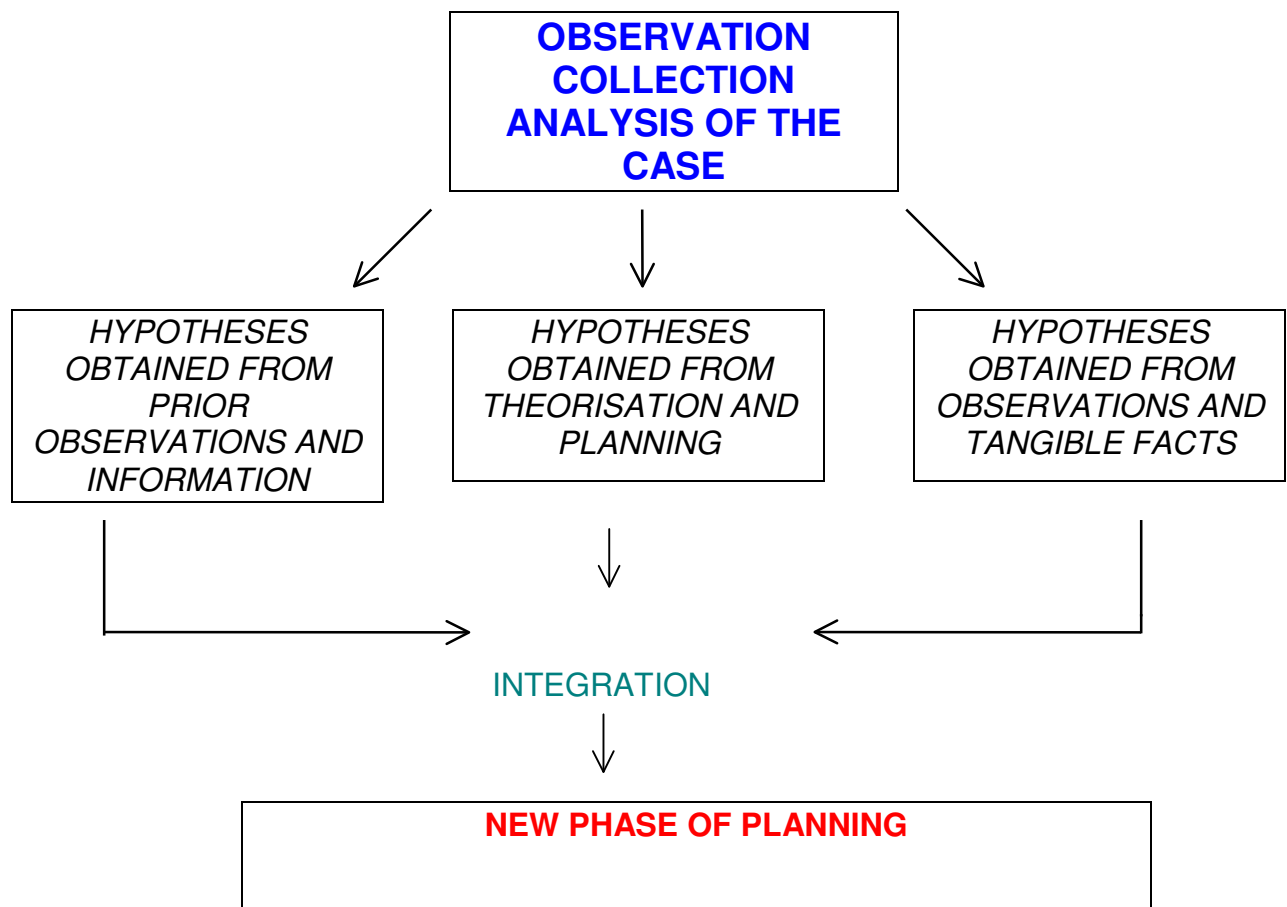
(1) For materials state the number of copies; for courses, the number of courses and participants, etc.

INTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE OUTCOMES

Alls experience in this field of the project are positives for the application of the methodology. The methodological procedure being defined here is based, in both operating and theoretical terms, on a structured “practice-theory-practice” model, which bolsters the construction of our training and research tools. To add an element of theoretical clarity, it could be said that this model proceeds by HYPOTHESIS. In etymological terms, the word “hypothesis” is formed of two parts: “*hypo*” (under) and “*thesis*”(position) or “*underlying position*”, which is the foundation and lies at the basis of something. Hypothesis conjures up the idea of digging, of identifying underlying motives, not immediately perceptible, and of providing the foundations for proposals, theories and beliefs.

Hypotheses attempt to establish meaningful relationships between phenomena and variables.

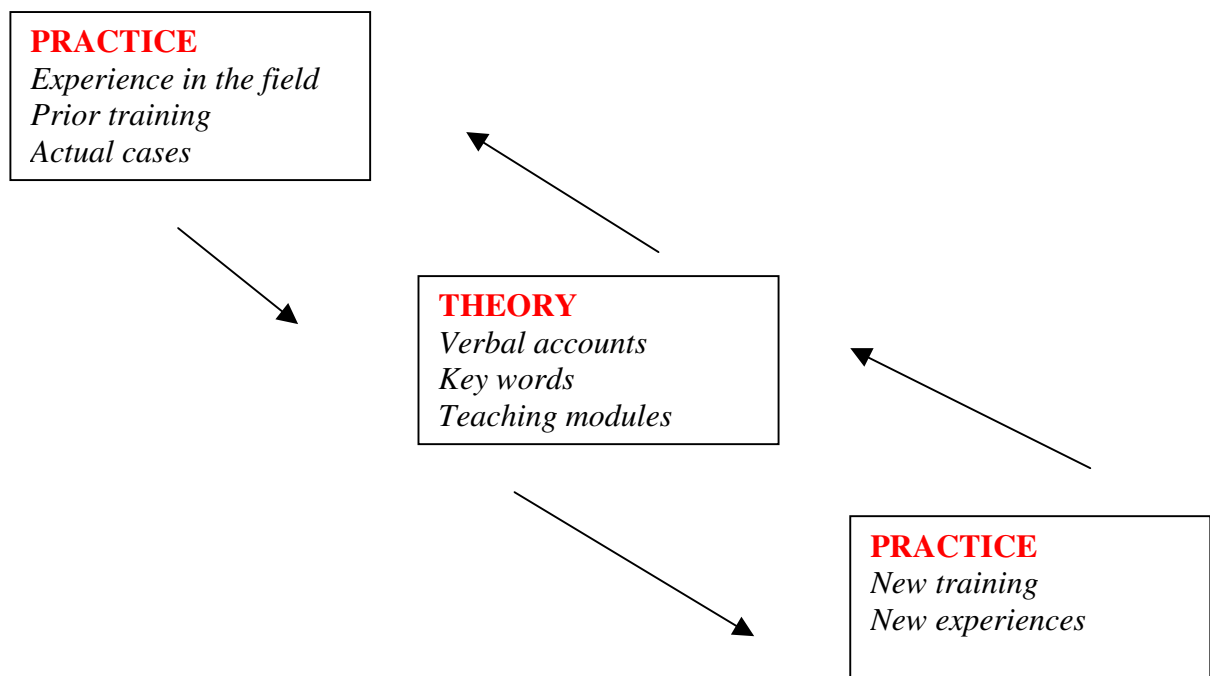
A hypothesis is therefore a dynamic element, which nonetheless also produces order and provides a guide and a reference. It is a compass which allows us to shift from actual data (what we call reality, also partly our representation) to possible data, checking the possible data by interpreting reality. Hypothesising in order to understand: this could be the motto of our working model, which may be portrayed as follows:



This diagram is based on a methodological process defined, as said, as **“practice-theory-practice”**

because “it is developed from observations/analysis of a phenomenon (first moment of practice)”, which also leads to tangible and direct observations in the field, but which must then be reformulated (theoretical moment) on the basis of integration of various levels of thought. Lastly, a new “form” of operativity is added, aimed at drafting a diagnosis which serves to define a new process of “intake”.

However, to avoid misunderstandings deriving from an excessively "linear" interpretation of this diagram, which depicts an "underlying process", it should be remembered that planning training, within our context, lies at the basis of a “circle of assessment”, which actually involves various levels of reflection and consultation.



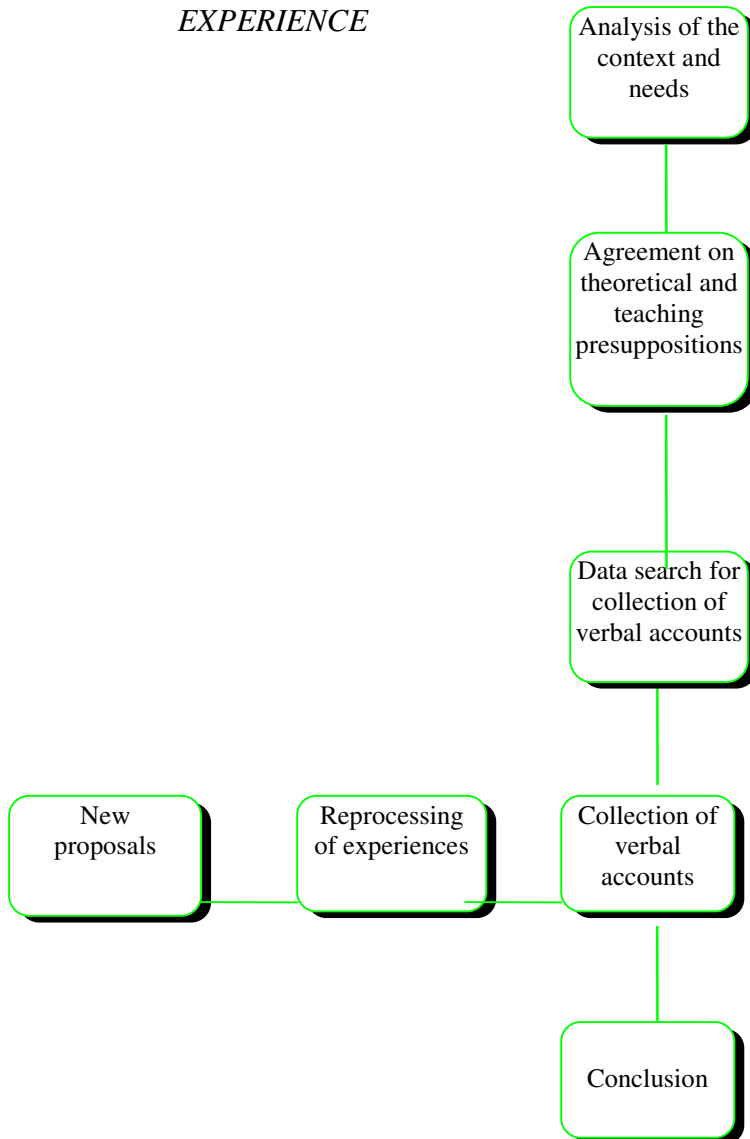
The different fields of work of each partner are a resource and not a constraint. This diversity is not denied, but rather considered as a resource in assisting comparison. At the same time, the shared structure defined for activation places this diversity into context within a shared concept. Each partner has a positive result from the application of this methodology in different fields of social work.

SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIVITIES

The sustainability of activities is guaranteed by a “programm indicators” that the partners have identified:

PROGRAM INDICATORS

PHASES OF EXPERIENCE



QUALITY FACTORS

- **Effectiveness** of the program of preliminary analysis
- **Pertinence** of the survey sample
- **Consistency** of theoretical models used

- **Promptness** in starting search for data and participants
- **Waiting time** for collection

- **Regularity** in performing the planned activities
- **Customisation** and appropriateness of the activities
- **Compliance** with the Project decided

- **Check** on quality of the program carried out
- **Organisation** of data on the activities performed
- **New training programs** activated

On the bases of this “promogramma indicators”, the partner have respected the steps for the elaboration of the CV project: is this common reference that guaranteed the sustainability of the activities in others contests of the field of social work of the partners. To achieve activation of the VC, it is essential to clarify what we define as the **steps in planning said activation**. Our experience has led us to identify at least five priority steps, namely:

1) IDENTIFICATION OF A SYSTEM OF OBJECTIVES on the basis of simultaneous analysis of the areas mentioned before. The objective must satisfy several requisites:

- ❑ being **meaningful** for those involved;
- ❑ being **operative** and not generic, in order to allow verification;
- ❑ aiming “**high**”, but being realistic;
- ❑ being **jointly planned** and not imposed;

2) IDENTIFICATION OF A PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES which constitutes operative interpretation of several aspects of the system of objectives. The program of the participants within the planned activities makes it possible to understand whether the objective has been well-formulated properly or whether it should be redefined.

3) CHECK ON RESULTS OF PLANNING

- ❑ Agreement on what to check.
- ❑ Parameters and criteria for checks.
- ❑ Need for re-orientating intervention and redefining objectives.

5) BROADER RE-PLANNING FOLLOWING REDEFINITION OF THE CIRCLE

The last step, which opens up towards new possible training and research scenarios for the group.