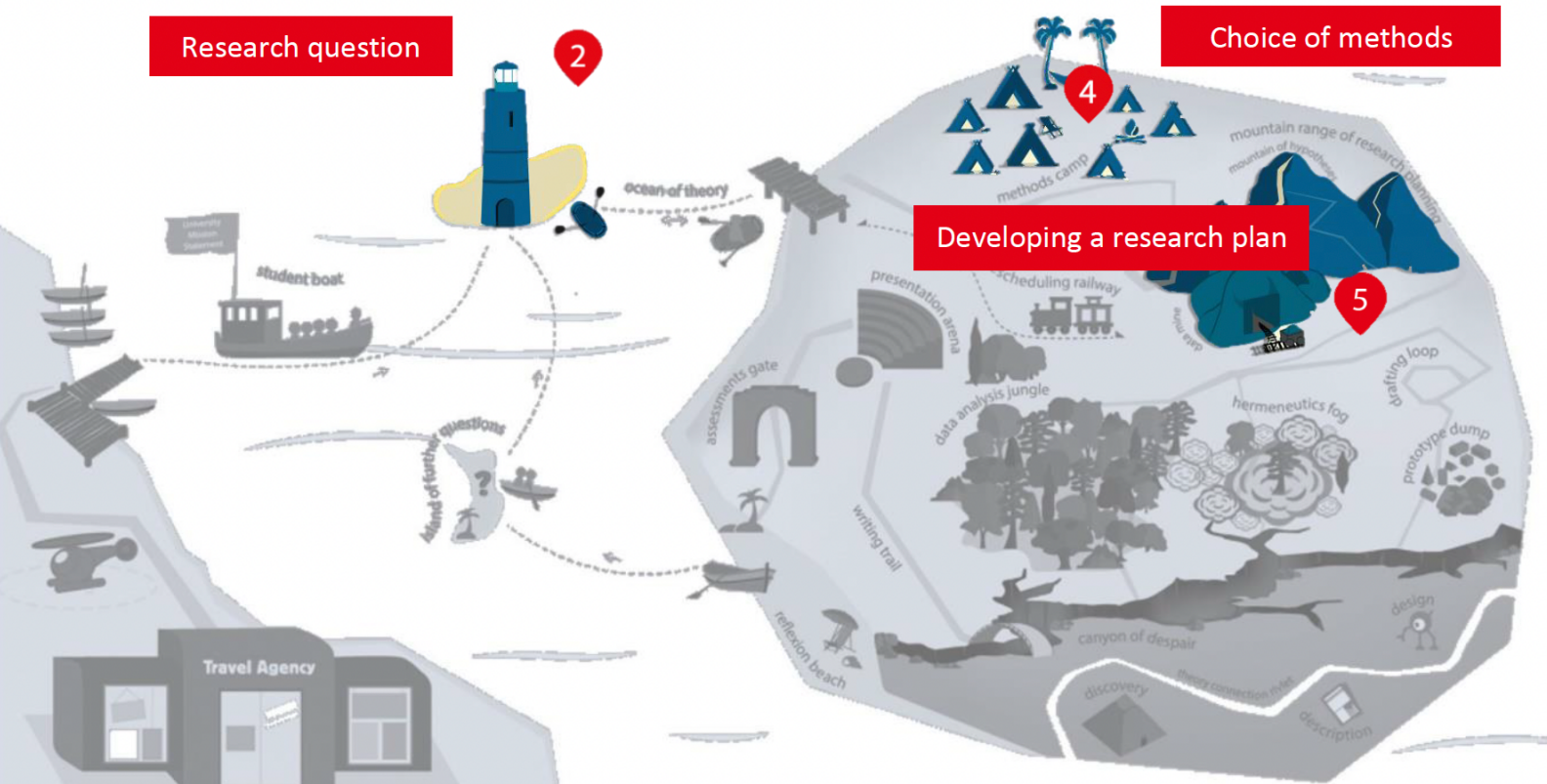




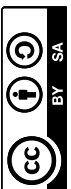
About searching and finding

Vignette #10



KEYWORDS:

LACK OF RESEARCH COMPETENCE,
TIME & WORKLOAD



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GEFÖRDERT VOM



#10: About searching and finding



The following text sequence or vignette describes a situation in the context of a teaching that aims at research-based learning. The situation described challenges you as a teacher and may require you to act directly. The aim of the vignette is to allow you to think about what you are doing in such a situation or how you could prevent it. But you may also consider the situation to be problem-free and more conducive to learning. Either way you can preventively familiarize yourself with possible challenges and reflect upon your own evaluations and impulses for action.

The situations described are taken from interview data with coordinators of research-based learning projects and have been sharpened for the purpose mentioned above. The most common challenges in teaching courses to promote research-based learning have been selected and converted into vignettes.



About searching and finding

Wednesday night. After you noticed in your course that students do catastrophic literature review – read whole books that do not even really have anything to do with the field of research, describe outdated findings or simply complain that they „find nothing“ in general – you offered your own course on appropriate literature review. The course was half self-pitying for the students and half productive, but you didn't even manage to convey the basics. A little perplexed, you set off on your way home.

Keywords: Lack of research competence, time & workload





Reflective questions

The situation described above is a typical challenge that you could face if you implement research-based learning in your teaching. The following questions of reflection serve as impulses to look at such or similar situations from different perspectives and then to come to different decisions:

Are there any external offers for scientific work that you can point out to the students?

How much autonomy do you grant your students in developing the research question, research plan and implementation?

What would change if you were to give more guidance on the research question?

What do you know about the students' course of studies and possible previous knowledge from other courses?

Could you also be satisfied with a low scientific quality of the research work?



Attitudes and actions

In the following, attitudes as well as preventive and intervening actions in the situation described are presented. First of all, attitudes are described which have an impact on whether and how to react. Then actions are presented. They are practical examples of how teachers at universities deal with the situation in a preventive or intervening manner. In addition, indirect measures are listed which involve a more subtle approach yet may have a strong impact.

Attitudes

Attitudes do not include concrete measures but describe the inner attitude of teachers (or coordinators) towards different situations. Depending on the attitude, situations can be interpreted as „problematic“ and „challenging“, but also as „desirable“ and „normal“.

Accept the fact that there is a lack of methodological skills at the beginning of the course

You are aware that the students are only at the beginning of their studies and may have little experience with scientific working techniques.

An appropriate action could be: You can provide students with additional support within the framework of your course, such as handouts or references to external offers and point out your own availability in case of problems. At the same time, you also see the difficulties as an important opportunity for the students to learn.

Preventive actions

Preventive actions prevent the situation described or rather makes them less likely. There is – of course – no guarantee of avoiding such conflicts.

Provide guidelines for project work

You develop a guideline for the project work, which illustrates the process and also contains an exemplary overview of recommended methods.

Benefit of this action: You can issue this guide (or parts of it) when needed. Also outline here which method is appropriate and when. For basic scholarly work e. g. literature search with reference to databases, many departments have guidelines which you could also make available to students.

Issue a guide to scholarly work

If there is a guide to scholarly work in your department, distribute it at the beginning of the event or as needed. If it does not exist, this would be an opportunity to develop such a sustainable handout.

Benefit of this action: If students lack basic skills in scholarly work, they can find valuable tips and advice on basic working techniques here.

Create an explanatory video

You create a video that explains the basics of research or other scholarly working techniques.

Benefit of this action: Especially when it is to be expected that other students will also have similar problems, it is worth making an explanatory video. Tell from your own experience and keep the production effort low, even simple videos can be effective. Students can deal with them outside of attendance time so that your course planning is not affected.

Intervening actions

Interventions are usually carried out „when the milk has already been spilled“. These are therefore acute reactive measures:

Offer basic advice

You allow students to address you in the course of their literature search, for example by discussing the literature list together – individually, in a plenary session or in the working group.

Benefit of this action: Students receive targeted feedback on their review status and concrete advice on where further investigation is worthwhile. They benefit from your expert advice in both theoretical and methodological terms. This also saves you time.

Outsourcing learning of research methods in workshops

You recommend offers for methodological learning to your students, which are offered independently of your course.

Benefit of this action: The students can specifically improve their methodological skills and benefit from this in the ongoing project without you having to spend resources on it. Workshops or crash courses also offer the advantage that students can use them as required and so in rather heterogeneously composed groups nobody will be bored with the „basics“.

Issue a method guideline

You prepare a guideline for the project work, which describes the process and also contains an exemplary overview of recommended methods.

Benefit of this action: Once prepared, you can issue this guide (or parts of it) when needed, i.e. when things get stuck at certain points. For example, you can outline possible usage scenarios for selected methods. For basic research work, entry points, databases, etc., many departments have guidelines for scientific work, which you can also make available to students.

Set up an extended project meeting

You extend the usual attendance time to a three-hour window to address the gaps that exist.

Benefit of this action: There is a fixed date on which the gaps can be filled. Such an extended time slot offers the advantage that you can work together with the students to deal with the problem in greater depth.