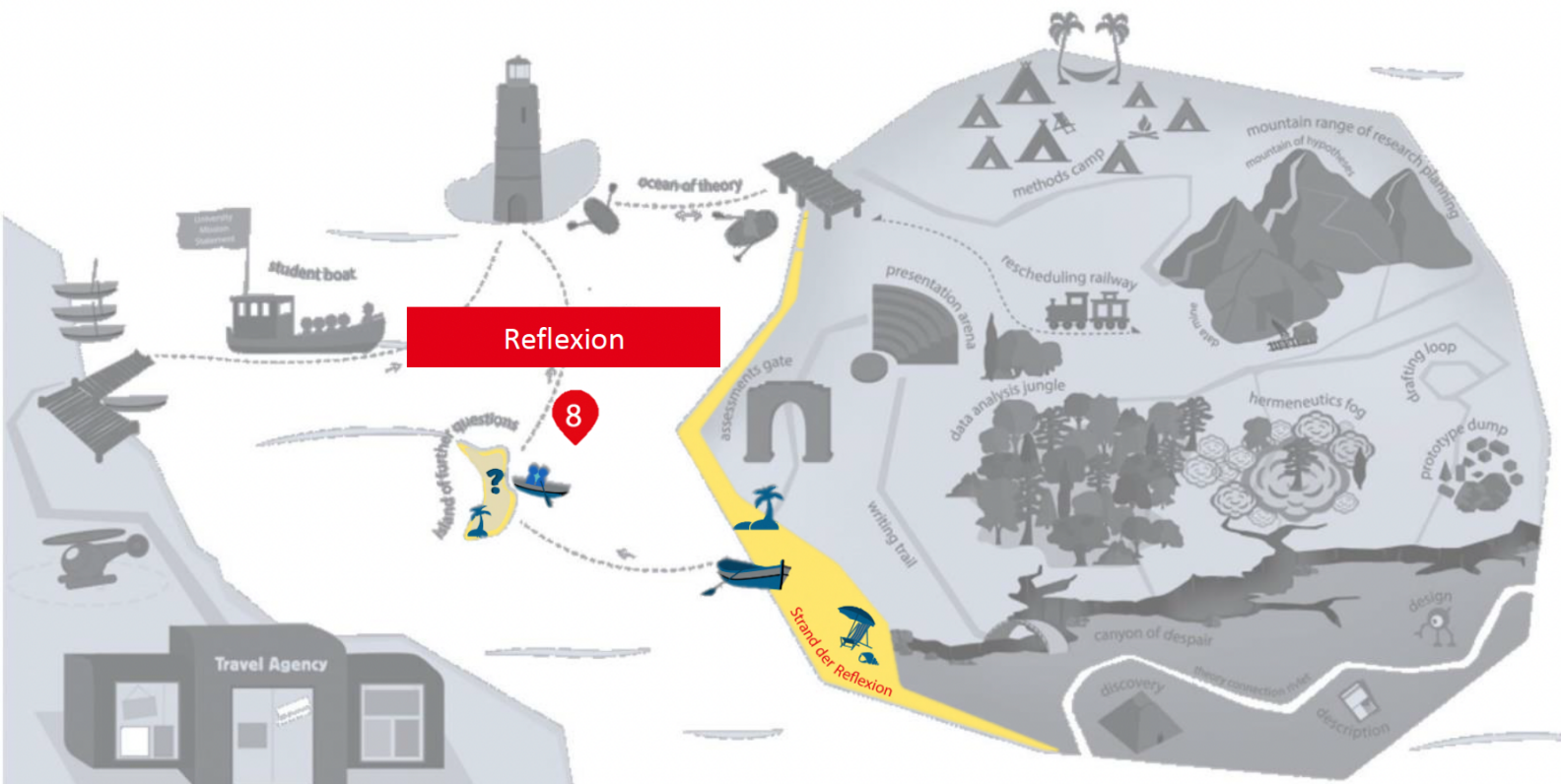




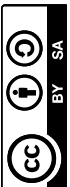
After-Thoughts

Vignette #14



KEYWORDS:

LACK OF REFLECTION



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GEFÖRDERT VOM

#14: After-Thoughts



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.



After-Thoughts

New course. Your office hour is attended by participants from the project seminar of your previous semester. The students do not agree with the grade they received on the project report. You yourself remember the grade well – you were shocked by what you read in the report. While the students seemed quite fit in the lecture and had quickly achieved quite good results, it became clear in the project report that they did not understand half of what they had worked on. When grading several project reports, it became clear to you that the students often do not reflect on their own actions.

Keywords: Lack of reflection



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:

How could you integrate phases of reflection better into the student research processes?

What kind of support for reflection can you give to students?

What goals do you pursue with the course and do you make these goals explicit in the course?

How do you generally deal with students who are dissatisfied with their grades?



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“.

Enabling experiences of failure that are not personal failures

You believe that mistakes are part of it. Students should learn something new from mistakes and develop further. It is important for you that failure does not remain the final result.

This could mean on the action level: You discuss the fact that something can and should go wrong. You encourage a reflective discussion with the students, in which they reflect on what went wrong and how to avoid it next time. It is often particularly effective if the students answer these questions themselves.

Preventive actions

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

Stay close during the process

You keep close contact with the students during the process, for example by convening regular meetings. There you question previous process steps and encourage reflection.

Benefit of this action: A failure as extensive as described in the vignette is not possible with such close supervision.

Encourage students to consider their work scientifically

In conversations you suggest that students deal with what the contents and methods learned have to do with themselves as future academics. On the one hand, they reflect on themselves and their future role. On the other hand, the students experience a critical distance to everyday assumptions and at best recognise ways to deal with content scientifically.

Benefit of this action: The stimulation of reflection during the process prevents the creation of such unreflected work as described.

Set up a “college day“

You set up a „college day.“ There students are instructed to reflect on their role as students at a university. Topics include the difference between vocational education and scholarly education, between knowledge and education and between science and crafts.

Benefit of this action: Students think about science and its meaning. This can have a positive effect on their scientific activities within the project.

Intervening actions

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

Offer a final discussion

You organise a final discussion at the end of the course. In it you encourage the students to describe their process so far. In the meantime, you can ask critical questions and thus stimulate further reflection.

Benefit of the action: At best, the discussion takes place before the students write their final report. They receive impulses to critically question their own work and, if necessary, to rework it. Arbeit kritisch zu hinterfragen und gegebenenfalls nachzuarbeiten.

Offer blogging as an activity

You can offer students to write a blog about their research. This communication format also indirectly documents what the students have not understood or which questions still need to be clarified. In this way, you as a teacher gain an „objective“ insight without having to have many conversations with the students.

Benefit of this action: Through the blog you have the possibility to observe the state of research and possible errors during the process. Thus, you can call for consultation appointments to intervene if necessary.

Have reflection processes guided by student tutors

You appoint student tutors who are available as additional contact persons for the students. They also stimulate reflection by asking critical questions in between.

Benefit of this action: Since student tutors study too, the exchange is usually more relaxed and familiar. This allows students to be more open and direct in their questions. In turn, the questions of the tutors are experienced as less threatening, so that impulses from them are less intrusive.

