

The instruction of effective collaboration in long-term student working groups

Following the call for papers, focusing amongst others on "challenges of organising group and project work, and how to address them" the following paper represents a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)-project which addresses this issue. Based on the interest in how to effectively promote collaboration in long-term working groups, the project aims to find meaningful forms of instruction that stimulate effective peer groups. Relying on a social-constructivist understanding of teaching and learning (Reusser, 2009), this paper examines how collaboration in student working groups can be designed effectively. The SoTL project is designed as a data-driven innovation report (Huber, 2014). The didactic innovations took place in the context of a one-year methodology seminar at the Institute of Educational Science. Based on theoretical considerations of the cooperation of effective working groups (see Johnson & Johnson, 1994), three didactic-instructive innovation elements – Team Charters (Cox & Bobrowski, 2000), role analyses (Belbin, 1981; 2010) and problem solving capacities due to data-driven feedback - were introduced and tested. The effectiveness of these elements was analysed in an online survey with the instrument "Fragebogen zur Arbeit im Team" (Questionnaire for working in a team; Kauffeld, 2004). To answer the differential hypotheses, mean value differences between a project group and two peer groups were analysed. The results show significant differences between the groups for duration and frequency of group meetings. This is also true, at least in tendency, for the indicators goal orientation, cohesion and assumption of responsibility, whereby there are no recognisable differences in the accomplishment of the task. A slightly positive conclusion can be drawn with regard to the effectiveness of the innovative instructional elements.

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