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Reaching Agreement: Thoughts of Participants in a Communitybased-Based Research Servicelearning-Learning Course on the Design of Consensusbuilding-Building Processes

Janine Bittner

Ruhr University Bochum, Institute of Geography, Germany

Abstract

In addition to fundamental coordination processes, working productively in teams also requires bringing together different ideas and concepts, and reaching an agreement in the case of conflicting views. Project and team-oriented work in university courses trains students in such working methods in addition to imparting subject and method-related knowledge and thus prepares them well for labour market requirements. I used students' written reflections as a data collection method to capture the views on how agreement can be reached when views differ within the team. The students were all participants in a two-semester long community-based research service-learning course in the bachelor degree programme in geography at the Ruhr University Bochum. In this course, the students were given the opportunity to deal with such questions through joint project work in a team and with partner organisations, as well as accompanying theoretical introductions to methods of project management and teamwork. The sheet for the written reflection at the end of the course comprised several questions, one of which related to the design of agreement processes. Using qualitative content analysis to analyse students' responses, the following main categories could be derived inductively from the text material, among others: 'finding a middle way/finding a balance together in the team', 'seeking the opinions of team members', 'critical discussion', 'listen to suggestions & ideas/getting into conversation', 'looking at different viewpoints', 'understanding the other person's viewpoint', 'finding a solution in the team'.

Keywords: Achieving Consensus; Experiential Learning; Qualitative Study; Student; Written Reflection