Design of digital block days

Field report from the area of Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Im Rahmen des Seminars „Gründen in der Sozialen Arbeit" werden Studierenden gründungsrelevante Kenntnisse vermittelt. Das Seminar wurde im Wintersemester 2020 / 2021 als digitales Blockseminar im Teamteaching angeboten. Der hier vorgestellte Erfahrungsbericht beschreibt diese Veranstaltung beginnend von den Herausforderungen über die Konzeption hin zur didaktischen Umsetzung. Abschließend werden zentrale Erkenntnisse in den Lessons Learned beschrieben.

Within the framework of the seminar "Founding in Social Work", students are taught foundation-relevant knowledge. The seminar was offered in the winter semester 2020 / 2021 as a digital block seminar in team teaching. The field report presented here describes this event, starting with the challenges, through the conception, to the didactic implementation. Finally, central findings are described in the lessons learned.

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1. Challenges

The seminar "Foundations in Social Work" was offered in the Master's programme in Social Work at Mittweida University of Applied Sciences. It was embedded in the module "applied specialisations" in the area of management and could be choosen by students as one of several elective options. Within the winter semester 2020/2021, the lecturers offered this for the third time.

The group of Master's students was heterogeneous in terms of previous education, age, gender and media competence. The participants were of different ages, already had different professional biographies and had diverse ideas about their jobs after graduation. It was important to leverage this prior knowledge, to use the experiences fruitfully and to offer a critical and enthusiastic examination of entrepreneurial modes of action. The students were in the 5th semester of their part-time master's programme or in the 3rd semester of the full-time master's programme in social work. Most of them worked in different fields of social work and had little to no experience in the field of business start-ups.

In addition, the students in the current seminar had a few experience with digital tools outside of programmes such as Zoom. The seminar relied on a high proportion of collaboration and self-activity, discussion and group work. At the same time, experiences in the previous semester showed that the students' attention span in the digital space was not very long. This could be related to the "zoom fatigue" [18] already studied or also to the double burden of care tasks as well as distraction by other digital media and devices.

The course broadened the knowledge horizon in various areas. The students dealt with the basics of economics and (general) project management, which have hardly been addressed in the curriculum so far. Due to newly developing fields of work, social workers will also not only work in their profession. Therefore, competences that go beyond one's own professionalisation are of decisive importance [1].

Thus, the activation and enthusiasm for the topic of reasons posed an additional challenge.

By using practical case studies and the lecturers' own professional backgrounds, as well as an open, reflective approach to the topic, the students were to be won over for the topic.

2. Concept of the seminar

The seminar with its high practical components was understood as a space of experience for the students. In principle, an experiential space can either be embedded in formalised educational measures or experienced in the social environment of the start-up process of companies [2]. Experiential spaces can be used in the context of teaching as competence-promoting teaching-learning arrangements. This teaching-learning situation must be structurally-organisationally and didactically-methodologically designed in such a way that new knowledge as well as new skills and abilities can be acquired in professional and social respects [3].

Experiential spaces are suitable for the development of competences relevant to entrepreneurship if they are complex in their design, can be actively experienced by the students and have a time limit. The teachers should support the students throughout the entire work process [4].

For the students, this experiential space must also be challenging in that this teaching-learning situation is completely new and motivating. Furthermore, the situation should support the participants individually. In entrepreneurship education, this situation should be used to reflect on one's own handling of new and challenging problems, for example in the context of developing a business idea within the course, and thus to make one's own behaviour in these situations transparent and thus also changeable [2] [4].

Entrepreneurship education can contribute to teaching students entrepreneurial thinking and action through various formats and approaches. It is relevant for social work in that students develop their own ideas in project seminars, for example, or work on practical and application-oriented problems. The students deal with the basics of business administration as well as (general) project manage-

ment, which have hardly been addressed in social work studies so far. Through Social Entrepreneurship Education, students are enabled to think in a user-centeres, creative and innovative way and to reflect on their own actions. In addition, students are enabled to transfer their specialised knowledge to real-life contexts. Furthermore, entrepreneurship education enables constant reflection on one's learning process and experiential learning [5].

Entrepreneurship Education was implemented in the winter semester 2020/2021 as part of a digital block seminar for Master's students with a maximum group size of 15 people. This group size made it possible to optimally involve the students in the design of the seminar. All students could be involved and actively acquire knowledge with the support of the lecturers. It relied on a high proportion of cooperation and own application, discussion and group work.

The seminar concept was based on constructive alignment. Here, the learning objectives, the methods and the examination performance are aligned with each other. This enables students to understand the objectives of the course much better. In addition, the course was oriented towards competences by the teaching team [6].

Furthermore, the lecturers unterstood theirselves as learning guides who accompanied the students on their way through the seminar. This also meant that students had to actively participate in shaping the seminar, contributing their ideas and suggestions and gaining knowledge by applying the theoretical content they had heard. This kept the students in the seminar and at the same time promoted motivation. In addition, students were also bearers of experience, as many of them were already in professional life and enriched the course with their knowledge and experience. Discussions and exchanges among the students encouraged them to question working conditions and methods. With the "shift from teaching to learning", students were accompanied more holistically. For the seminar, this meant designing a student-centred learning environment that was conducive to learning [7].

Specifically, the students dealt with business model planning during the four block days. They started with the identification of a socially relevant problem and dealt with it by means of entrepreneurial approaches as well as with the development of corresponding business models.

An important aim of the seminar was to provide the students with methods that they can also apply and use in their everyday working lives as employees.

The seminar was based on the following teaching-learning objectives:

Through the use of creative methods, the students' self-reflective, innovative and actively creative thinking and acting is promoted.

By applying and practising on the basis of their own case studies, students are able to transfer specialised knowledge to real contexts.

Students get able to develop business models from their own project ideas with the help of Canvas.

These teaching-learning objectives are made clear to the students in advance; this also promotes transparency between students and teachers of the course and avoids misunderstandings between them.

The decision in the winter semester 2020/2021 for synchronous courses was based on a thorough survey of the thematic points at which the students had experience or non-experience. In addition, the appeal of the concept lay in the mix of methods, so that short intensive knowledge inputs were followed by timely application exercises. These had to be reflected on and questions of understanding clarified. Different levels of prior knowledge also led to flexibility in time planning and in the planning of the main topics.

The units were also adapted to the needs and requirements of the students or a larger period of time was made possible for exchange with each other, as learning also means social learning [8]. In this context, the students' social competence was promoted through synchronous teaching sessions, in that they were constantly in exchange with each other and with the lecturer. Attention and activity also had an influence on learning success.

Through the work with PowerPoint presentations, lectures, the self-learning phases and the presentation of one's own work status, different learning types were addressed. In addition to the visual type, the auditory and kinaesthetic type were also addressed, especially through the application of theoretical content and the use of various digital canvas and print templates for working with pen and paper. The communicative type of learner was mainly stimulated by the discussions and own speeches. A balanced change between the different forms was essential for the block event in order to address all senses to the same extent and thus enable the students to learn on different channels.

3. Didactic design

The basic structure of the seminar was based on Bloom's Taxonomy [9]. In the course of the seminar, the students expanded their competence from "knowing" to "analysing and evaluating". Each taxonomy level was represented by the use of different digital media.

Before the start of the seminar, all students received a welcome email. In terms of content, the students were informed about the course of the block days, time units, learning objectives and the form of the examination. They were also asked about their initial expectations of the seminar and offered support in the event of technical difficulties or special needs. In addition, the students received a link to the virtual seminar room with information on its use and possibilities. The students had the opportunity to communicate their own topic wishes and suggestions for the seminar design at any time.

In the first unit, a first approach to the topic of social entrepreneurship took place, in which students worked out their definition of foundation. This raised already existing levels of knowledge. The students were encouraged to actively think about themselves and their own environment and to engage in exchange within the framework of Think-Pair Share [10].

The Zoom conference platform was used as the digital tool for implementing the seminar. Due to the various possibilities, such as the dig-ital whiteboard, the possibility of screen sharing and working in breakout rooms, the tool offered good conditions for the implementation of the content to be conveyed.

The digital whiteboard mainly offered the possibility of brainstorming in the large group and thus approaching specific topics, such as social entrepreneurship. At the same time, this tool was also used for collecting ideas or compiling work results in the small groups. In addition, the digital whiteboard was also used in the context of social entrepreneurship to gather moods and feedback.

In particular, setting up breakout rooms and working in small groups there promoted (digital) togetherness and the possibility of working together in teams. For the teachers, this also offered the opportunity to have different groups work on different assignments and present them afterwards. The teachers could enter the rooms at any time or bring the teams back to the main room. Precise work instructions and clear wording were just as important as a clear time limit to counteract queries and ambiguities. In addition, buffer time was planned, as the groups first had to familiarise themselves with each other and with the task. Regular enquiries by the teachers regarding additional time needed or difficulties in implementing the method also had to be planned for.

In order to improve collaboration among the students, different tools were used during the seminar. Among other things, the idea tower [11] was used to develop ideas. This is a form of brainwriting and is completed by several students in rotation. The padlet was used here as a digital alternative. Afterwards, the idea generators talked about the ideas they had developed and exchanged ideas about their feasibility. A particular challenge for the teachers was to create enough padlets and assign them correctly to the respective persons.

Furthermore, canvases were used for the group work. These worksheets basically offered good possibilities, among other things, for working out who was the user and who was the customer of the product/service that the students were developing. The canvases also provided a good structure and overview. For

example, it would have been easier to create a business plan from a (social) business model [12] in a next step. These templates could be used again and again for further or later ideas, so that they offer good methods for everyday practice in the students' different fields of work beyond the seminar.

Furthermore, feedback was an elementary method for the continuous improvement process as teachers, but also for the students' reflection in order to find out where they stood in their process of acquiring knowledge. The following feedback methods were used in the seminar:

The flash focused on the questions "What helped you to find an access to the topic?"; "Which practical references contributed to a better understanding?" and "The most important insight today was ...". [13].

By means of a one-minute paper at the end of the course, the students were given one to three questions in order to receive (anonymous) written feedback on learning gains, difficulties in understanding or the design of the course. In the digital room, the Etherpad or the Padlet was used for this. Another use was to write down three essential contents of the course, which were not evaluated by the lecturers, but served as a reflection by the students [14].

With the help of the five-finger method, feedback was also requested from the students. In the context of the seminar, the fingers had the following meaning: the thumb: "This is what I have learned", the index finger "This could be improved structurally or in terms of content in the context of the seminar", the middle finger "This was not implemented well in terms of content", the ring finger "This is what I will take away thematically" and little finger "The topic was dealt with too briefly" [15].

After each block day, the lecturers briefly summarised the contents and gave an outlook on the following block days. The students were always invited to contribute their own ideas, suggestions for topics or wishes for the next event. In addition, the students were given a self-study task to tie in with the contents they had learned and to deepen them further. These tasks were taken up at the beginning of the next event and discussed in plenary.

The seminar was offered in team teaching [16]. For the teaching team, this meant that they were relieved by a better distribution of tasks. Each person was assigned different tasks at different points. While one teacher imparted theoretical content to the students, the second teacher prepared breakout rooms and assignments, for example. In addition, the teachers were able to supervise the chat in parallel and register any technical problems that arose in a timely manner. In addition, it became possible to accompany students during the collaborative tasks at the same time and to react to questions about the content.

Statements, comments and questions from the students were recorded in their entirety by the teaching team and were not lost. Due to the different types of teaching, ways of speaking and the presence in the digital space, the attention span of the students was maintained for longer.

Due to the different experiences and professional backgrounds, the teaching team additionally enriched the seminar by stimulating discourse and exchange and by being able to bring in their own practical examples.

Nevertheless, good and precise consultation was needed in the teaching team. Different interests and approaches had to be taken into account in the planning and implementation in the team. Differences in content had to be discussed promptly. Furthermore, it could have been challenging for students to get involved with two people and to meet their demands [17].

At the end of the fourth block day, a part of the examination performance was taken by the students. Each group, consisting of two people, presented their business idea in the form of a digital pitch. Each group could use the split screen to illustrate what they had said with a poster or a presentation. After this five-minute presentation, there was an opportunity for questions. In a second step, the students evaluated and reflected on the seminar and their knowledge acquisition in a written reflection report.

4. Lessons Learned

The teaching team takes away the following insights from the digital block seminar "Foundations in Social Work":

The plannable is often not plannable in its entirety. The Corona pandemic showed that all previous (didactic) ideas and approaches had to be discarded and redesigned within a very short time.

For the digital block courses, the lecturers should actively plan breaks in order to counteract digital fatigue and the drifting away of the students' thoughts. In addition, the breaks also serve as a short rest for the lecturers and for brief consultations.

Furthermore, short units are a key insight. Theoretical input should not exceed 20 minutes. An activating exercise afterwards additionally promotes internalisation and transfer to one's own circumstances.

In the digital space, a diverse selection of collaborative tools is available and should be used. This also promotes exchange and social interaction among students. Nevertheless, these should always be selected with regard to their usefulness.

Furthermore, constant and continuous feedback in the digital space is essential in order to check for difficulties in understanding, problems in the use of digital tools and wishes for improving the course.

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