



A-Z University Teaching & Learning

Dealing with the amount of material

Justifying the content

As a scientific educational institution, the university's task is to continuously broaden expert knowledge. Even in narrowly defined branches, the volume of existing knowledge is immense. This raises the issue of how to deal with this amount of material in courses. In university education, integrated expert knowledge must be "untied" from its network. Depending on the formulated learning outcomes, time frame, and target groups, a selection from the existing expert knowledge must be made. If a course's objective is practical application or reflection, it makes sense to supplement the imparting of knowledge with exercises and to delve into certain aspects. Although there will be less time to actually present the subject matter, this means that an in-depth examination of the presented content can be achieved.

Principles of didactic reduction

Planning a course begins with identifying the objectives or the "why": Why it is necessary for certain contents to be learned with certain methods? Only in a second step and depending on these aspects can one determine how the learning material can be reduced.

The following three principles serve as guidelines for reducing your material:

Accuracy

The material should be presented consistently and correctly. If, for the sake of simpler presentability, certain simplifications are made which would no longer be considered fully correct in a more complex framework, this must be made explicit.

Expandability

The presented materials, examples, or models should be selected so that they can be extended and expanded later.

Appropriateness

Content must be checked regarding its importance. The level of presentation should be adapted to the knowledge level of the participants.

The principles of didactic reduction also apply to online learning environments and eLearning. Here, too, make sure the choice of your material is justified. If you want to provide learners with further information, label it clearly as additional material.

Literature for further study (in German)

Lehner, Martin (2011): Viel Stoff – wenig Zeit. Wege aus der Vollständigkeitsfalle. 3. Auflage. Bern: Haupt.

Ritter-Mamczek, Bettina (2011): Stoff reduzieren. Methoden für die Lehrpraxis. Opladen: Buderich.