



Hand in #3: Working process and learning experiences

Date of submission: 14.01.2025

Group 7: Chiara Stichling, Gabrielle Gomes Viana, Marianne Jocelyne Fellay, Om Mahesh Vaknalli, Parinder Khural Dalby, Sara Kristin Skaliks

Our working process

Key Issues or Events

Overall, our group encountered no significant challenges while working on our case study, Whaling in Iceland. The experience was smooth and collaborative. Our initial task was to select a case, for which we adopted a democratic process. Each group member proposed at least one topic or more, presenting them to the team. This brainstorming phase reflected the diverging stage of the diamond model, as we explored a variety of options with different perspectives. We then held a vote to determine the most interesting topic. Since there were six members in the group, we had a wide range of ideas, so the first round of voting did not yield a winner. Ultimately, we moved toward the converging stage where we went through three rounds of voting, systematically narrowing down options by eliminating those with practical barriers such as translation difficulties or limited data availability. The final selection was based on objective criteria (Fisher & Ury 2012), and we provided justifications for our decisions since all the proposed topics were equally engaging.

During the course of work, after submitting the first hand-in, there was a major regulatory change related to our case. This prompted a discussion about whether to include the new updates or continue with our perspective. We discussed various ways to include the new developments and evaluated their impacts compared to our initial submission. The discussion was productive and flowed smoothly, as everyone used efficient communication tools, such as actively listening (Krauss & Morsella, 2014), and respected each other's perspectives (Fisher & Ury 2012).

Negotiations and Decision-making

Regarding the negotiation processes occurring along the several assignments, ours were consistently always on the same track. From early on, the communication was clear, which allowed for a good working dynamic. Everyone shared their own needs and interests for the project which resulted in a commonly agreed collaborative approach, prioritizing the outcome of the group work rather than the case choice itself (Fisher & Ury, 2012). The decisions concerning the assignments, the workload and the overall direction of the project resulted from group brainstorming and choices commonly agreed upon. This kind of transparency proved to be essential in the good dynamic of the group, making it possible for everyone to be on the same page (Krauss & Morsella, 2014).

Every member of the group showed a motivated spirit when it came down to working on the project, however, no emotional involvement was generally present towards a case or a manner in which to proceed. This enabled us to foresee the best outcomes for the group rather than pushing our interests and maintaining strong positions (Fisher & Ury, 2012).

Trust and communication appeared as key elements in the development of the hand-ins. The first few exchanges happened without any problems, followed by consistent work given by each member. This developed what can be recognized as “Calculus-based trustworthiness”, implementing rather stable expectations and reliability in the relationships (Lewicki & Tomlinson 2014). Consecutively, we each learned to rely on the others, developing a certain level of trust which after being established, grew along the several assignments.

Facilitation of Group Work

The individual conflict orientations (E6) categorize people into five different approaches when it comes to conflicts. There are the forcing people, who force their opinion on the other part of the conflict and give them a hard time to share their point of view. Then there are the avoiders, who try to avoid even getting into a conflict because it makes them feel uncomfortable. Thirdly there is the approach of yielding, which describes a conflict approach of always giving in and not standing up for their own opinion. Furthermore, we have the problem-solvers, who act proactively, trying to find a solution that works for everyone, either by compromise or even finding a third option where no one loses. Finally, the compromising approach is very fair, combining many of the others. Compromisers do not want to give in, but they will also not force their point of view on others. They would rather meet halfway so everyone wins a little bit (Pruitt and Kim, 2004).

In our group, we were half problem-solvers and half avoiders, which created a very good working environment from the first session. Due to not having any people with a forcing approach, the “avoiders” also had the feeling of having the space to state their opinion without confronting someone and getting into a conflict. In all our discussions, everyone felt safe to talk about their concerns and how they would handle certain tasks. In combination with the problem-solving approach, this led to a very harmonic and productive group work. It was easy to find answers to our problems and thus a pathway for all three assignments.

Learning styles in the group

Role of different learning styles and how they were utilised

All group members underwent self-assessments of learning style inventory (E13). The output parameters of the assessment were plotted onto the Cycle of Learning and the Learning Style Type Grid. The analyses revealed that our 6-member group comprises divergers and convergers.

This made sense in hindsight, as the group generally followed a pattern of gathering information, brainstorming, debating, compartmentalising, and weaving deductive reasoning to reach a meaningful conclusion. The first half of the process was led by the divergers, where a plethora of information and arguments were brought to the table, while the structure and deductions were led by the Convergents. This meant that both forms of learning dialectics (Concrete-Abstract, Active-Reflective) were present in the group in a balanced manner, helping us form a well-rounded diamond model approach to acquire information or solve a problem (Daniels and Walker, 2001). One of the group members was also found to have traits of the accommodative learning style which enhanced the motivation and intuitive capabilities of our group discussions while preventing impasses. The group lacked the participation of an assimilative learning style, which might have made our discussions more structured, cascaded and concise. The addition of such a learning strategy could've also contributed to the inclusion of more visual elements such as graphs, figures, as well as theoretical models in our reports.

Different approaches if learning styles were known?

The working process in our group went as well as we had anticipated from the beginning. After a final discussion on our process, we concluded that earlier results of the learning style analysis would not have impacted our group work. However, we still gained much knowledge from each other's working approach. Our working process was based on efficient discussion rounds within each session, forming a collaborative learning approach. We also emphasized this collaborative learning approach as a goal for the group. As Daniels and Walker (2007,p.142) stated, we made use of participating in collaborative activities and good communication, the quality of our interactions and enhancing our contributions to the decision process. Our ideas and individual work complemented each other in such a way that we could combine our different thoughts and approaches without knowing our specific learning types.

Conclusion

The group work had a good foundation of trust and communication. The initial trust that was built and reinforced with reliability helped us negotiate our positions openly and fairly (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2014). Therefore, we were able to learn, in practice, that trust is a key element in simplifying negotiations. The reliability that was reinforced by all participants meeting the deadlines, participating in class, and showing up for group meetings proved to be important to maintain trust.

Moreover, we observed that employing clear communication with transparency and prioritising active listening helped us be on the same page about our needs and interests, which made it easier for all group members to understand each other's positions. All members were aware of using tools for efficient communication and there was a high level of self-reflection, both of which made the process easier (Krauss & Morsella, 2014; Daniels & Walker, 2001).

Finally, one last learning element was about personal interests when collaborating and negotiating with others (Fisher & Ury, 2012). All members were able to put emotions aside as everyone regarded a good learning and working environment to be highly important. We credit the success of the group experience to being influenced by not letting our emotions impact how we worked and treated each other, as we all focused on the common interests and goals of delivering a good result, meeting the deadlines, and learning the course's content.

References

Academic Articles and Books

Daniels, S. E., Walker, G.B. (2001). Crafting Effective Policy in a Contentious and Complex World, *Working Through Environmental Conflict The Collaborative Learning Approach* (pp. 35). Praeger Publishers.

Fisher, R., Ury, W. (2012). *Getting to yes: Negotiating an agreement without giving in*.

Krauss, R. M., & Morsella, E. (2014). Communication and conflict. In M. Deutsch, P. T. Coleman, & E. C. Marcus (Eds.), *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (pp. 161–181). John Wiley & Sons.

Lewicki, R. G., Tomlinson, E. C. (2014). Trust, Trust Development, and Trust Repair, *The Handbook of Conflict Resolutions* (Chapter 5)

Pruitt D. G., Kim S. H. (2004). Social Conflict, *Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement* (Chapter 1). McGraw-Hill