

Learning Through Service: Complexity Theory in the Classroom

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teaching Organizational Theory to undergraduates poses some significant challenges. Their lack of work experience makes it very difficult to engage them and hold their attention. This article describes an action-learning approach to teaching the subject. Conditions are created for students to self-organize themselves around a service learning project using a complexity theory framework. By taking action and reflecting on their actions, students learn about organizing in the face of ambiguity. Specific examples of service learning classes and their results are discussed.

Keywords: Service-learning, action-learning, self-organization, complexity theory