



Universität Potsdam



Anke Uhlenwinkel (Ed.)

Teaching about the religious values of Europeans

Critical reflections from the second student exchange of the EVE-project

Potsdamer Geographische Praxis // 1

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I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

FOREWORD

Anke Uhlenwinkel

This book reflects the experiences of the second exchange of the European Values Education project. As the first book it is written in English as the contributors are student teachers from four European countries (Turkey, Slovakia, the Netherlands and Germany) and their lecturers plus colleagues from the United Kingdom. As during the first exchange, the student teachers worked together in two multicultural groups, planning and teaching lessons in the host country, only this time the Turkish student teachers went to the Netherlands and the German student teachers went to Slovakia.

The students had to prepare lessons using teaching units that had been developed by the lecturers of the universities taking part in this project (Bosporus University Istanbul, Fontys University of Applied Sciences in Tilburg, the London Institute of Education, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica and Potsdam University). The main topic of the units was ‘religion in Europe’ and all of them used maps from the Atlas of European Values. As the units were written for more than just one lesson the teacher students had to choose what to teach, and they were encouraged to use the curriculum framework as a guideline. After having taught their lessons they were asked to evaluate their experiences. To do this, in each of the two exchange groups, six groups worked on the four steps of the curriculum framework (relating to students, working with patterns and trends, explaining data and critical thinking) and two additional topics (developing lessons and conclusions for future teaching) respectively. The results of these evaluations are found in the following chapters.

The topic of this exchange, religion in Europe, proved to be a real challenge. While the Turkish student teachers stressed that some terms and underlying ideas seem less convincing from their perspective, some of the Slovak-German groups found it hard to see how the topic could be integrated into geography lessons. This is also reflected in the fact that there are no British examples in this book as there too, the problem arose of how to use the assignments in geography classes. Also some Slovak-German groups found it hard to relate the topic to Slovak pupils. All this is vividly

described in the chapters and it is here, where the student teachers' work may help to discuss some difficult issues from different perspectives.

The first three chapters set the scene for this second exchange: the first chapter deals with the videos of pupils from the participating countries produced for use in the classroom, the second chapter gives a short overview of the findings of the European Values Survey on religion in Europe and the third chapter discusses the development of the curriculum framework used by the student teachers.

Overall the book reflects the second stage of the project. Some lessons have been learned from the first exchange and improvements were made. Still there are a lot of things that probably can be done better. It is an on-going process and the student teachers contributions to this development are paramount for future success.

VIDEOS RELATED TO THE MAPS

Uwe Krause (Fontys University of Applied Sciences Tilburg, the Netherlands)

The grant for the EVE project was granted for several activities. One of the ideas of the project is that the teaching materials developed for working with the maps of the Atlas of European Values should also be accompanied by videos. The challenge is to integrate these videos into the teaching materials and to show them being used in the lessons.

In the opinion of the participating experts of this project the best way to define learning is 'sense-making'. One important way of sense-making in a European context is for young people to identify with their peers in other countries. Consequently, 12 videos (3–5 minutes) have been produced in each participating country on how young people think about 4 issues (work, religion, family, society) together with a portrait of the interviewed students. These films have been made between December 2009 and April 2010 and the last subtitling of the films will be done in February 2011.

Young people at the same age of pupils at secondary schools were chosen for the videos. The age varies from 12 years up to 19 years. In the United Kingdom, the people are a little older because of the legal constraints regarding videoing younger students.

Of course all of the filmed youngsters and their parents agreed on their participating in this project. Except for the Netherlands, where geographical spread and different school levels have been taken into account, the interviewed persons live in the city or surroundings of the participating universities.

The students were interviewed in different settings and sceneries, like their own room at home, in front of a church, in a café. The selected interview questions were asked in the same way as in the original research so that the results are comparable. The focus of the questions about work was on the role of the government and unemployment. For religion the students were asked about their own religious feelings and the role of religion in general. Gender issues and upbringing were the themes of the family questions and migration and environment for when the young people were interviewed about society.

As the videos weren't available during the student exchanges of April and May 2010, they couldn't be used during the try outs of the student teachers. But as transcripts of the videos and their translation into English have been done very rapidly, some of the

statements from the video's have been used in the assignments developed by the project partners, like for example in 'Religion and Politics'. In the future student exchanges the videos will be available and on 25 November 2011, when the new website will be released, they will be accessible for the public.

How could the videos be used in teaching practice while working with the maps of the Atlas of European Values? First of all the videos personalize some of the questions asked in the European Values Study and where the maps are about. The maps only show averages for the whole country. Behind these maps could be a range of different views, perhaps close to the mean value as illustrated on the map but perhaps very different. The videos contribute to the discussion of this important aspect in classroom.

But the videos don't only show what the young people think about the questions which have been chosen for the interviews, they also give answers why they think that way. These reasons given in the films could be the first steps when it comes to argumentation in classroom and to deepen the understanding of what could lay behind the maps.

Beside the videos about work, religion, family and society also a 'home story' has been filmed of each of the interviewed youngsters. This short portrait gives an impression of the daily life of young people in five countries, their school, their hobbies and their family life. The interviews are made in the mother language of the participants and subtitled in to the different languages of the project partners. With these 'insight views' pupils at secondary schools can connect more easily and these home stories also give explanations for why the interviewed persons have a certain views on certain issues. When watching the home stories of the Dutch persons for example (<http://blip.tv/file/4613840>), it might be strange for pupils in other countries, that it is quite common to have a job in the weekend or the afternoon after school. The question is to what extend it also affects their attitudes towards work.

The films can be used in different classroom situations: by beamer or interactive whiteboard (which is a trend to become standard classroom equipment in some of the participating countries like the Netherlands) or in more individual settings like a computer room, library with computer facilities or at home. No matter in which way they are used, they have the potential to contribute in a very positive way to the teaching about Europe, European values and the maps of the Atlas of European Values.

RELIGION

Loek Halman, Josja Rokven and Inge Sieben

In most Western European countries, more and more people no longer belong to a church denomination or attend religious services. These changes, which are called ‘secularization’, can be attributed to economic modernization processes. Just like modernization processes are different for different societies, the process of secularization also is different in different countries. The specific cultural and historical developments of countries are strongly related to the degree in which religion loses its dominant position in society (Wilson, 1998). This means that modernization theory cannot explain all differences between countries. For example the United States, a highly ‘modern’ country, seems to be immune to secularization so far. Furthermore, the story in Eastern Europe and Turkey is completely different. Here, country-specific circumstances and history has led to patterns that deviate from the general trend of secularization.

It has to be noted, that ‘secularization’ is not the same as ‘secularism’. The latter term denotes the separation between religion and the state, and the freedom of religion in general, whereas ‘secularization’ refers to the process that religion is less and less important in people’s daily lives. In addition, the term ‘modern’ is not meant as a judgement (in the sense that a modern society would imply not being backward and underdeveloped), but simply a word to denote that some countries are more economically advanced than others, and that value patterns are more liberal and non-traditional than others. Whether this is a good or a bad thing, is for others to judge.

WESTERN EUROPE

An important explanation for the decreasing influence of religion in the lives of people in Western Europe can be found in the modernization theory. Modernization describes a large number of fundamental social changes: such as an increase in prosperity and the construction of welfare states. With the development of welfare states, security

for people increased. Where previously religion provided certainty for people, now the welfare states offer this certainty and therefore religion has become superfluous. In traditional societies, religion restricted the individual freedoms and religion stipulated or dictated the entire lives of people. Specialisation and professionalization have led to the development of differentiating sets of values in different spheres. As a result, the role of religion decreased in many fields (Dogan, 1995). Moreover, specialized institutions developed, for example in the fields of upbringing, care, and education. As a result, the role of religion has been marginalised.

Modernization processes have also led to an increase in freedom of choice. Together with the increased level of education, the power and authority of traditional authoritarian institutions, such as the church, decreased. This is visible by the large reduction in the number of church visitors and members. This is also indicated in the concept of de-traditionalization. De-traditionalization is characterised by a cultural change, where traditions become less important and where the emphasis increasingly lies on individual freedom, personal autonomy and self-determination.

Secularization can be considered as individualisation in the field of religion. The secularization thesis states that the decreasing influence of religion can be ascribed to the modernization process (Wallis & Bruce, 1992). However, a distinction should be made between the different spheres in which secularization takes place. One can distinguish three dimensions of secularization: the societal, the organizational, and the individual. At the individual level, secularization means the decline of believing in the traditional dogma. At the level of institutions (church) secularization means declining church membership and church attendance. Finally, there is secularization at the societal level, described by the decreasing value of churches and religion in society.

The fact that less people attend church nowadays in comparison to before does not, by definition, mean that people are less religious now than that they were when the churches were full of people. For many people visiting a church was a social duty rather than an expression of their religiosity. On the contrary, it can be assumed that people who now go to church do so due to a personal conviction and because they are religious. It thus seems to be more of an institutional crisis than a religious crisis.

Another explanation comes from the increasing degree of rationalization. According to some, the reduced power of religion can be ascribed to the rationalisation process. The increase in rational thinking has undermined the power of belief in supernatural, mysterious and magical things (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). From then on nature no longer consists of wonders and mysteries. Science and technology provided logical explanations for things that happened to people, and as a consequence, people no longer have to rely on religious declarations and interpretations. Of course, not everything can be explained by logical-rational thinking but, nevertheless, people now less rapidly accept religious declarations for certain phenomena. Religion may still be used when one wants to understand things like depressions, times of extreme stress or the end of life. But overall, technology and science have undermined the power and the authority of religions.

EASTERN EUROPE: THE CASE OF CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

Under the communist regime, the church was suppressed throughout Czechoslovakia. The present day Czech Republic is the most industrialized, best developed, and most self-conscious part of the former Habsburg Empire (Froese, 2001). Increasing Czech rebellion against Habsburg went alongside an increasing aversion to the Catholic Church that was closely linked to 'Vienna'. On the other hand, present day Slovakia was governed by Hungary, and was less developed, poorer and more agricultural. After the Czechs and the Slovaks merged to form Czechoslovakia in 1918, a growing number of Slovaks felt subordinate to the Czechs. The Catholic Church expressed the sentiments of the Slovaks against the dominant Czechs.

TURKEY

Although officially Islamic, the Ottoman state has for a long time had a secular state system with Islamic law restricted largely to family law and contract law. In fact, secularism has always occupied an important place in Turkish legislation. There has been no official religion since the constitutional amendment of 1924, a division strengthened by the so-called Kemalist state ideology and later by Atatürk, who gave it a central role in the country's modernization. However, in the 1980s influential groups challenged secularism and as a consequence Islamic practices experienced a substantial revival. Still, in spite of the formal separation of state and religion, the Turkish state still exercises strong control over religion, so that the separation between the two looks very similar to a state-church-system, in which state and church cooperate (Tomka, 2005). This historical development has left the country with ties between religion and state that go further than those of any other country in Europe. This may be due to the fact that Turkey as a whole is economically less developed and, therefore, less 'modern' than many other European countries. The fact that most people are religious in Turkey is inherent to the fact that the country has a more 'traditional' value pattern. Moreover, the development of a 'modern' welfare state offers increasing levels of existential security. This reduces the need for reassurance of salvation. In 'traditional' societies, on the other hand, absolute belief systems provide certainties and assurances of salvation, if not in the present world, at least in the next. The people in Turkey cannot take survival and security for granted and, therefore, there is need for a religion on which people can rely.

THE EVE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK – DEVELOPMENTS ON THE SECOND PHASE

Clare Brooks

In the first book I outlined how the EVE project team developed a curriculum framework to support the work of the project team and the participating teachers. The curriculum framework accompanied the lesson plans as a guidance document, communicating the goals of the project, and how the lesson plans sought to achieve those goals. It was viewed as a working document, subject to revision in the light of the experience and evaluation of the first stage of the project. In the chapter that follows, I outline the evaluation results of the first set of exchanges on the theme ‘work’, and the subsequent revisions made to the curriculum framework.

EVALUATIONS

Pooling together the evaluations from student teachers, pupils and the project team, a number of common themes emerged from the first set of exchanges.

The first theme was the influence of the teaching context and the impact this could have on the success of the lesson plans. Participants in the exchanges reported mixed results in the light of the age of the pupils being taught, the length of the lesson and the experience of the pupils. For many the ‘one-size fits all’ approach of the lesson plans proved very difficult to teach, and many adaptations had to be made.

The second and third themes were related to this variety of contexts. Different contexts meant that teachers and students teachers were differently prepared to adapt and amend assignments in the light of who they would be teaching. Some teachers felt that adaption of the assignments was a normal part of a teacher’s work. Others felt the assignments were authoritative, and were reluctant to make adaptations. On the whole, even when lessons were adapted for individual classes, the student teachers still reported difficulties in pitching the lesson correctly, scaffolding the activities appropriately, and teaching enough of the assignment in the time allocated in order for the lesson to make sense.

Finally, the evaluations conducted across the project also focussed on different dimensions: some explored the success of the lesson in its own right, others evaluated the lesson assignment against the project objectives.

In the light of these comments some further issues arose around the approach and nature of the project. Some of the maps were unclear and required complex ‘reading’ before they could be used with students. Specifically, many of the maps featured different scales and legends, making comparisons between data sets difficult. This was made especially difficult when students were not clear what they were looking at the maps for i.e.: what were the pupils going to learn, and how did this fit in with teachers’ specialisms? Some participants were not clear how the lessons on (for example) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation tied in with understanding spatial patterns of work.

This issue was exacerbated by the differing expectations of the participants: to what extent were student teachers free to amend assignments? How specific were the learning outcomes and purpose of the assignments and could these be adapted? And what if the lessons did not fit in with the subject curriculums in the schools where they were being taught?

These comments seemed to emphasise an even more pressing need for a clear curriculum framework that supported student teachers working with EVE assignments. However, discussion with the project team left many issues unresolved. Cultural differences meant that expectations of teacher autonomy were markedly different. The trialling context of a class unknown to both teachers was also an issue, as was the time allocated to the EVE lessons whilst student teachers had to introduce themselves and the project before embarking on the lesson plans.

All of these comments were taken into account, and over long discussions (often well into the night!), the curriculum framework was adapted to our Version 2.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK VERSION 2

*EVE uses **disciplinary/academic** concepts (such as place, space, socialisation, and cohesion) to help pupils understand how Europeans **compare or cohere** in attitudes and values by exploring different social contexts (i.e.: work, religion, society, and family).*

*Through this analysis, pupils will develop a critical **understanding** of an individual’s responsibilities in a diverse society and society’s responsibility to the individual. This is an important component of values education. However, it is not about the transmission of pre-determined values, but the emphasis is on pupils questioning and clarifying their own values, and actively exploring and empathising with the values of others.*

To meet these ambitious objectives, the curriculum framework below has been designed to support teachers in constructing lessons which use the maps and data from the Atlas of European Values. This is not a prescriptive approach, but can be used and adapted to enrich most curriculum structures.

Our approach contains four stages. It is not essential for the stages to be followed

in the order below. However, in order to meet the objectives of the EVE project, all stages should be covered at some point. They are designed with a particular classroom approach in mind: one where students are actively engaged in their learning, where they feel comfortable to discuss these issues with their peers, and where they consider the lesson content to be relevant to their lives. An important dimension of this approach is the development of the pupil's metacognition.

THE STAGES

- a.) *Relating the attitudes represented in the maps of the AoEV to their own. Pupils need to be able to situate themselves in the discussion about different values and to be able to empathise with a range of other perspectives.*
- b.) *Describing differences (and recognising similarities) - Pupils need to be able to recognise patterns and trends as they appear in the maps of Atlas of European Values. These patterns may be, for example, spatial, social, cultural or economical, and as such pupils may require some specialist support (either through their teacher or through engagement with relevant theories and ideas) in recognising, and identifying them.*
- c.) *Deepening Understanding. Academic concepts and theories deepen our understanding of why differences (and similarities) in attitudes and values exist. However they do not have all the answers, and some theories are inadequate. Therefore, this approach requires that students use concepts from academic disciplines as a lens through which they can view the data on attitudes and values. Once they have made this connection, they are then in a position to question, verify and reformulate these theories. This process we understand as argumentation.*
- d.) *Developing critical perspectives. The expression of individual values and attitudes reflects a complex web of ideas and beliefs which can be difficult to unpack. Therefore to interrogate the messages within the data pupils need to comprehend its' subjectivity and to question the assumptions that may underpin it.*

MAIN CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

One of the key criticisms of the lessons was in relation to what pupils were learning. Many of the lessons in the first round of the project were focussed on reading maps. However, the participants wanted more. What was the point of 'reading' the maps,

when they raised more questions than answers? The project team felt that the answer lies in the disciplinary frameworks that guide our understanding of the world. In the redrafted curriculum framework, much emphasis is placed on these disciplinary or academic concepts both in the framework introduction and in the stages of the project. This addition required a restructuring of the stages of the curriculum framework, and a re-evaluation of the introduction. As a result, the focus and purpose of the curriculum framework was made clearer, and the stages were structured in a more logical progression.

LOOKING FORWARDS

It is safe to say, the project team were not thoroughly happy with version 2! But the notion of a working document was strongly held and the project team avowed to return to the curriculum framework in the light of the experience of teaching the assignments on ‘religion’.

II. RESULTS OF THE GERMAN-SLOVAK GROUP

SLOVAK SCHOOLS

Michal Pažický

The Slovakian school system can be subdivided into three sectors. The elementary sector, called ISCED 0, is represented by the nursery school, which can be attended by children under the age of six. The compulsory education, lasting ten years, starts at the age of six.

Compulsory education starts in primary school. Primary school contains two stages: the primary level, which is called ISCED 1 (*primárne vzdelávanie*) and the secondary (school) level 1, which is called ISCED 2 (*nížšie sekundárne/stredoškolské vzdelávanie*). Both stages are closely connected. Students between the age of six and ten attend the primary level, which consists of four grades (1 to 4). The secondary level 1, following primary level, contains five grades (5 to 9), which are attended by students at the age of ten to fifteen. Primary school lays the foundations for further studies and practical experiences. Secondary school ends with a compulsory all-Slovakian test (monitor), examining the proficiency level of all students in mathematics and the Slovak language.

The Secondary level 2, which is called ISCED 3 (15/16-17/18 year-old students) is subdivided into three levels: high school, secondary professional school (*Stredná odborná škola*) and conservatory. Depending on the students' individual start of high school, either after the ISCED 1 or ISCED 2, high school contains four or eight grades, respectively. Students accomplish the general qualification for university entrance by taking the school-leaving exam at the end of high school. Secondary professional school (2 to 5 grades) is a preparation for certain professional disciplines and provides theory instruction as well as practical training. Conservatory imparts artistic and artistic-pedagogical education. Education and learning are realized in these stages with the help of educational programs.

The students, that have already passed their school-leaving exam, extend their specialized education in the post-secondary level, called ISCED 4.

The tertiary sector, ISCED 5 (including conservatories, colleges and universities), offers education at specialist colleges, bachelor programs (period of study: three to four years), master of engineering (period of study: one to three years), studies to get one's doctorate (period of study: six years) and the PhD program (period of study: three to five years).

The subject local studies (Vlastiveda), which is taught in primary school, is seen as the first contact between students and geography. However, geography is not taught as an independent subject until the secondary level 1, in which it is taught at least one hour per week. Students acquire basic geographical knowledge at this stage of their education. These basics can be expanded in high school because geography is an obligatory subject in the first, second and third grade. Studies for geography are offered by universities for student teachers and students who are about to take their diploma.

RELATING TO STUDENTS

Andrea Blahušiaková, Christian Röper-Kühnemann, Christoph Staufenbiel
and Hana Vozárová

This time it seemed to be very easy to make up the teaching groups: we more or less worked in the same groups as we did, when we were in Germany. The difference was, that this time we had to work on all the assignments. That meant, we had to create ten groups of two students each, because there were ten assignments to work on. So we decided to simply split each former group into the pairs of students who lived together in Germany. The Slovak students had contacted the schools before, so the teaching groups were already allocated to different schools. The schools were all situated in Banská Bystrica, except two of them, one located in Brezno about 45 km and the other in Liptovský Mikuláš about 86 km away from Banská Bystrica. The grades were not as diversified as the classes in Germany; all of the Slovak classes were the eleventh or twelfth grade, which means the pupils were in their last years at school. The latter is the final school year, from which the students progress to start an apprenticeship or to attend university. Fortunately the Slovak students asked for English speaking classes, so both nationalities could be involved in the lessons. (In Germany we had a problem with the language that forced us to teach in German in most of the lessons, which was a pity, especially for the Slovak students). The major task for us was to develop one single lesson from the assignments on religion, We considered the topic interesting and appropriate for the pupils. Because of the similar grades, we were often able to plan both lessons the same way, which made it a little bit easier to spend enough time on creating an interesting and exciting lesson.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'DEVOTION TO RELIGION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP'

As mentioned before, this time we had no choice of the assignments, we had to work with all of them. So we did not discuss which assignments were interesting to the pupils and which assignments were relevant to them. But we had to discuss how we could develop an interesting and exciting lesson out of the given material of the assignments. The

teaching group, who did the assignment ‘Devotion to religion and Active Citizenship’, reported, that this assignment was hard to understand for the pupils and they needed a lot of time to explain to the pupils what it was all about. During the lesson the teaching group didn’t use the tasks given in the assignment. They created a separate work sheet for the pupils which contained the tables needed for task 6 and 7. The lessons started with basic questions about being religious using the traffic light game. The pupils did not fill in any work sheets for this, they just raised their hands showing a green, yellow or red card depending on their opinion. After this starter, the teaching group showed the maps from the assignment and handed out the work sheets. At this point the understanding of the pupils became problematic. The student teachers had to explain a lot to make the tasks work. After the lessons the teaching group said that this assignment was very interesting for the pupils, but they had problems understanding the connection between religious life and being a citizen of a nation. For the pupils this could not be separated. Every person has to live as a citizen in a country with all the associated personal duties and rights. That means it doesn’t matter whether the person is religious or not. So the pupils didn’t find the link between religion and citizenship at first. The lessons ended with a discussion about the assignment. The pupils learnt that there is a relationship between religiousness and active citizenship, and that this relationship is more or less present in the different European countries.

THE ASSIGNMENT ‘HOW ARE RELIGIONS SPREAD ACROSS EUROPE’

The teaching-group expected that the pupils would know a lot about this topic, so they decided to focus on historical phenomena and problematic zones in Europe. In the end, this was the right decision, because the pupils reported that they had thought it would be boring but found that it wasn’t. Our student teachers focused on the religious conflicts in Europe like the one in Northern Ireland and in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The lessons started with a work sheet that showed a blank map of Europe and the pupils were asked to guess where the borders between the different religions were. At this point the material from the assignment was very helpful and was used by the teaching-group. What was very special about these lessons was that they were held in a school which was equipped with interactive whiteboards instead of a normal blackboard. That made it easy to use the maps and work sheets from the assignment, because they could simply be projected without needing any preparation. Based on the data shown in the maps, the pupils worked on the distribution of religions across Europe, which led into a discussion at the end of the lesson. In one lesson the discussion was not very successful, but in the other lesson the discussion was very effective and interesting. The two student teachers had quite different experiences working with an interactive whiteboard. One of them was very pleased to work with this technology and the other missed the blackboard. But both of them were surprised how naturally the pupils worked with the electronic equipment.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'IS FOOTBALL AS IMPORTANT AS RELIGION?'

The teaching group who worked with this assignment was very glad about this topic, because they thought this was a very interesting topic to the pupils. Preparing the lessons the teaching group had no expectations about the results of the lessons, because it wasn't possible to guess, what the pupils would think about the connection between football and religion. So in the end the result was a little bit surprising to the student teachers, because the pupils in general didn't think that there could be a connection between football and religion. The lessons started with a short introduction showing the map on believing in god. The student teachers had created a Powerpoint-presentation, but in the first lesson the whiteboard didn't work, which forced them to improvise. Instead of showing the presentation they worked with short-stories and examples. After the introduction the student teachers asked the pupils to work with the Toulmin scheme of argumentation discussion the question whether football is as important as religion. The student teachers were surprised that the pupils understood the Toulmin scheme immediately and worked very well with it. Some examples of the argumentation with the help of the Toulmin scheme by the are:

- » *I'm not interested in football*
- » *I'm a fan of the Brezno football-team, because my friends are playing there*
- » *I'm a fan of the FC Liverpool, because I like their fan-chorals*
- » *Football players are nice*

The pupils got to know about the different opinions in Europe regarding football and religion and that there are regions in Europe, where the connection between football and religion is strong (where football is some kind of religion) and regions, where football and religion are not linked at all.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'WHY BE RELIGIOUS?'

The teaching group expected that the classes would be divided into religious and non-religious pupils and therefore they could discuss their respective views. The lessons started with the traffic light game to get an overview of the pupils opinions. But there were less pupils who considered themselves religious than expected. Afterwards the teaching group presented the maps from the assignment to introduce the different views people have in different European countries. That was followed by a diamond ranking, for which the pupils were divided into groups and had to rank possible reasons for being religious. In the first lesson each group created a different diamond, but in the second lesson, all diamonds were very similar with the reason 'belief in god' on top. Overall, the ranking showed, that the Slovak pupils related religion not only to believing in god and going to church, but also to the belief in supernatural powers, telepathy or in someone's self. The lessons ended

with a discussion, which in both lessons has been very lively, because the pupils found the topic interesting and they all had opinions about it. In both discussions the pupils came to the conclusion, that religion influences everyday life in all European countries and is important for life in general (culture), but that there exist a wide range of attitudes about it, depending of every individual person and whether they are religious or not.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'LUCKY CHARMS'

The expectation of this teaching group was that every pupil would have an idea of what lucky charms were and maybe had one him- or herself (unfortunately only a few pupils actually got their lucky charms at school). With this expectation in mind, the teaching group aimed their lessons at the link between religious life and lucky charms. To give some basic information to the pupils, the teaching group showed the maps taken from the assignment. Afterwards, the pupils filled in some transparencies with the statistical information of four different European countries (England, Germany, Poland, Slovakia). This took place as a group work and was necessary to compare the different European definitions of lucky charms. Afterwards a discussion about lucky charms took place. The discussion was very lively and interesting and led to the insights the lessons were aiming for, namely, that there is no relation between religiousness and the use of lucky charms in Europe. At the end of the lessons, the pupils had to voice their opinion about religiousness and lucky charms by using the traffic light game. The teaching group remarked, that it would have been very good to use another method, because the traffic lights game, although it did work, was not the best suited method for the purpose.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'NO CREO EN EL JAMAS' (LIFE AFTER DEATH)

The teaching group started the lessons with a scale on how much pupils believe in life after death. The expectation was that there is a big mix of different opinions, because all the pupils had different backgrounds. The scale met the expectations, because the pupils showed a wide range of answers to this question. After the starter, the teaching group tried to deepen the pupils understanding by working with the maps from the assignment and talking about them. After showing the maps the pupils were ask to brainstorm on the question of why some Europeans believe in life after death and others do not. In general the expectation of the teaching group about this assignment was true and they achieved the aim of the lessons to develop a critical understanding in relation to the idea that views on life after death may vary from country to country, with some strongly believing in life after death and others almost unconcerned, although these opinions do not necessarily relate to how religious people are.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'RELIGION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON POLITICS AND POLICIES'

The access to these lessons was established via brainstorming on the words 'politics' and 'religion'. The teaching group expected, that the pupils didn't have too much knowledge about the topic, so that they were surprised to find out that the pupils actually knew quite a lot about it. Although the pupils did have a good knowledge base, they had problems working with the assignment because of new or unknown methods (especially group work). The main part of the lessons was the discussions in small groups about the maps from the assignment. The pupils were pleased to talk about the topic, because it is not very common to speak about the problems of politics and religion in school. But the teaching group reported that the material from the assignment was not very useful, because the maps look very similar and there were no reasons given for why there are differences in the relation between politics and religion in the different European countries. But in the end the aim of the lessons, to develop a critical thinking about why religion is or is not related to politics in different European countries, had been reached.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'SECULARISATION IN EUROPE'

The teaching group expected that the pupils already know about secularisation and they were really surprised when they found out that the pupils didn't even know the meaning of the word. This was not a problem of using a foreign language, because the classes were bilingual with English as the main language. So the student teachers were forced to change their lessons a little bit and they tried to use the maps from the assignment to make the topic more visual. Due to the problems of understanding, the prepared teaching methods didn't work very well, It was hard for the pupils to understand the topic of the lessons. But the student teachers were able to initiate a discussion on the topic, so that they were quite satisfied with the lessons, but they hadn't expected so many problems with this topic. In the end they thought that they did a good job, because the discussions have been very lively and the pupils developed some very good and creative ideas about secularisation in Europe.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS PLACES'

The teaching group were very happy with this topic, because this topic was the most geographical one. But during the development of the lessons the teaching group got the impression that the material from the assignment was not very useful and they created a new work sheet, which was the starter and basis of the lessons. They started the lesson by showing a picture of a famous church in Bratislava and the pupils

brainstormed about that specific religious place. At the end of the brainstorming the teaching group offered the pupils a definition of religious places by Yi Fu Tuan. The teaching group expected the pupils to have very different ideas of religious places, but this expectation was not realised. The pupils worked with a worksheet using the snowball-method. This method inspired the classes to start discussions about religious places and their meaning. Nevertheless, in the end the teaching group was a little bit disappointed because the results of the snowball were the same in both classes taught. Both times pupils named Mecca, Jerusalem and Vatican-City as religious places, only one group named Lourdes instead of Mecca. This made the discussion at the end of the lessons difficult, because there were no different opinions about the meaning of religious places. Even though the pupils usually used 'official' evaluations to argue for or against the importance of religious places, they also thought about religious places in a very private way. The result of both lessons was, that the pupils understood the Tuan definition of religious places and learned to apply it on different religious places, e.g. that they have official and/or individual meanings.

THE ASSIGNMENT 'UNITY IN DIVERSITY'

The teaching-group expected that the pupils knew about religiously homogeneous and heterogeneous countries in Europe and about tolerance and intolerance in European countries and the lessons totally hit their expectations. The topic was related to the pupils by handing them a table of ten European countries, for each of which they should name the main religion. They guessed the main religion and the teaching group gave them feedback afterwards. The main problem of the lessons was the lack of knowledge about teaching methods. To explain the methods to the pupils took a lot of time. At the end of the lessons, the pupils found out that Slovak people think that they are more tolerant of other religious groups than they actually are. So the aim of the lessons, to teach about tolerance and intolerance, was absolutely reached.

WHICH CONCEPTIONS DID YOU FIND?

Basically we can say that our expectations of the pupils' opinions were usually fulfilled, but there were some surprises as well. Some teaching groups overestimated the pupils' knowledge about their topic and some underestimated it. In general, the German students were surprised that the Slovaks are not very religious at all. This is similar to the former eastern part of Germany and can be caused by the post-socialist heritage. (Twenty years after the German reunion, the former western part of Germany is still more religious than the former eastern part of Germany.) Overall, we have to say, that religion was a very controversial topic to all people who were involved in the project and the opinions about religion ranged from one end of the scale to the other.

Generally we received a warm and positive feedback to our lessons. Because of the short time available, we could not include every single pupil in our lesson, so in each group there were one or two pupils, who were not interested in the topics and also did not participate in the discussions. But the teachers of the classes were very pleased with our lessons and told us that their pupils had been very active and inspired. A very positive aspect was that the pupils found our lessons very challenging and that they were forced to challenge themselves and others. Thereby they gained new understandings and got an opportunity to reflect on their own thinking in a critical way. Many pupils told us that it was great to look at several topics from a European point of view and they were surprised how many differences there are, which they had never thought of before.

DESCRIBING PATTERNS

Katarina Hintze, Michal Ivaška and René Kallenbach

Having pupils learn about patterns was one of the aims of the curriculum framework. But even to us as student teachers describing patterns didn't seem to be an easy task. So the question arose how we understood the patterns offered in the assignments and how we explained them to the pupils.

As every group taught a different assignment, we decided to develop a more general questionnaire that would help us to understand what each group member thought about patterns and what experience the different groups had when teaching patterns.

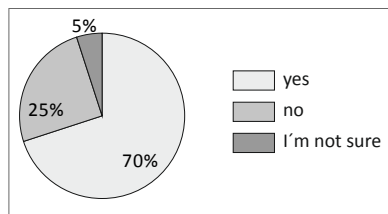
WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF 'PATTERNS'?

For students, patterns generally meant a kind of model or a theoretical structure which can be used to explain the regional distribution of one item, by finding similarities to the distribution of another item. The advantage is that one does not simply describe what one obviously sees, but that the description becomes more focused and thereby more accurate and more appropriate to use for further investigation. Thus patterns can be used to give reasons for why a certain aspect is the way it is and to draw conclusions by using, for example, reasons which are valid in one country to explain a similar aspect in another country. From this point of view patterns can be seen as a way of generalizing things and they are also considered to be some kind of basis for the development of deeper understanding.

Students also think that there is a strong connection between using patterns and good teaching, because the use of a proper structure can help to prepare a better lesson. The teacher should always have some idea of the patterns underlying the topic he teaches, so that he not only presents the bare facts and information, but also some logical background of the matter. Of course it is more convenient if the pupils were encouraged to find the patterns themselves instead of simply presenting them to them. As a result, patterns are important because they give a broader insight into a certain problem or subject.

DOES YOUR ASSIGNMENT INCLUDE PATTERNS?

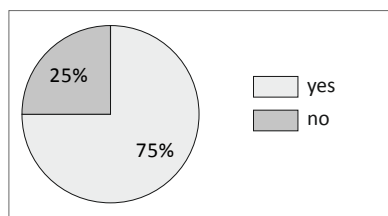
The outcome of this question was that 70% of the students said that their assignments did include patterns. A quarter of them couldn't find any patterns at all. And only a small group of the students was not sure whether there were some patterns or not. So, most of the students were able to identify patterns in their assignments.



Graph 1: 'Does your assignment include some patterns?'

DID YOU DECIDE TO USE SOME OF THE PATTERNS?

With the help of this question we wanted to find out, how many students actually used patterns in their lessons in Slovakia. The result showed, that 75% of the students, when planning their lessons, made use of the patterns offered. A minority of 25% prepared their lessons without using any patterns.



Graph 2: 'Did you decide to use some pattern in your lessons?'

IF YES, WHAT PROBLEM DID YOU EXPLAIN WITH THE HELP OF PATTERNS?

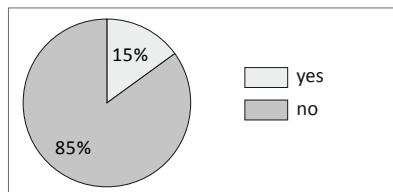
According to the student teachers there were many different problems that they explained with the help of patterns: religious tolerance in European countries (particularly the tolerance towards Jews and Muslims), the connection between lucky charms and religion and between football and religion (which do not seem to be very connected to each other at first glance), diversity and differences among countries, for example the question, why people in some countries believe in God and while people in other countries choose to believe in telepathy. For instance, in one school pupils were wondering why Italy is not the most religious country in Europe since it is the place of residence of the Pope. The students tried to explain this seemingly contradictory outcome of the European Values Survey by referring to the concept of modernity. In modern countries there are less religious people, and northern Italy is rather modern, so that can be one of the possible reasons why religion plays a minor role there. Another group of student teachers explained the relationship between devotion to religion and active citizenship using patterns. The Atlas of European Values was a very helpful tool for explaining these patterns, because the included maps are very detailed. Almost every group of students used some patterns and the atlas as assistance to get better explanations to the original problem.

DESCRIBE WHICH PATTERNS YOU USED AND HOW YOU USED THEM.

The student teachers mostly used patterns based on the maps where pupils could see certain structures (for example the relation between believers in God and believers in telepathy, or the connection between believing in God and lucky charms). These structures can be either described as organized by regions (Western Europe versus Eastern Europe or countries in the north versus countries in the south), or by other aspects, for instance big countries versus small countries or more developed versus less developed countries. One group of students assumed that more homogeneous countries are more tolerant than more heterogeneous countries, but, of course, there are also some exceptions. Certainly, patterns are usually not absolute and valid in all cases, so for every identified pattern you can also find examples which do not fit in. Another group used a pattern making up a relation between how religions people in a certain country are and the dominant religion in that country. This implies that some religions are considered to be stricter, while others are seen as religions with more freedom.

The patterns used in the classroom were always chosen depending on the age level of the pupils, so that they can fully understand the explanation.

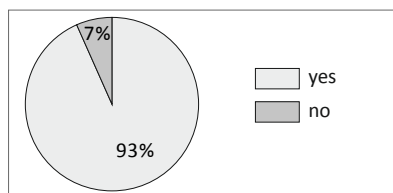
DID YOU EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF A PATTERN TO YOUR PUPILS?



Graph 3: 'Did you explain the concept of pattern?'

The result of the question was absolutely clear. Only 15% of the students explicitly told the pupils what patterns are. Most of them, that is 85%, thought, that it was not necessary and helpful for the pupils to know it.

FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW – DID PATTERN OFFER A HELPFUL STRUCTURE TO PREPARE YOUR LESSON?



Graph 4: 'Was this helpful to use patterns for preparing a lesson?'

The outcome of this question was completely clear: 93% of the students who used patterns for preparing their lesson thought that it was very helpful and useful. Only 7% had a different opinion and thought, that they did not need patterns for the preparation of their lesson.

TO WHAT EXTENT WERE PATTERNS USEFUL FOR THE PUPILS TO UNDERSTAND THE MAIN TOPIC OF THE LESSON?

There are different answers about the usefulness of patterns.

Four students did not consider patterns as being important to understand the main topic of the lesson at all.

More often than not patterns were considered useful for a better conceptualisation and understanding of the main topic of the assignment. In addition they help to show differences and to understand the theories that could help explain different examples. Because of using patterns, the topic seemed clearer to the pupils.

In general, patterns are always useful to understand that geography is a complex science. It's easier to connect the different topics with the use of patterns.

HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE TEACHING PATTERNS IN YOUR ASSIGNMENTS?

It's important to know how to improve teaching patterns in the assignment because there were a lot of questions and discussions about patterns before the student teachers had to plan their lessons. Some of the student teachers were not satisfied with their assignments because there were no clear instructions on whether you should use patterns or not.

This is why some of the students think that the whole assignment needs some revision. Furthermore it would be helpful if the concept of patterns could be explained to student teachers more clearly and in their native language. This would help all student teachers to be feel confident in their understanding of the topic.

IF YOU DIDN'T USE ANY PATTERNS, EXPLAIN WHY.

Some of the student teachers didn't use patterns because of technical problems. For instance, some pupils couldn't work with prints of the maps. So the student teachers thought it would be easier to present the patterns to the pupils because the lesson only lasted for 45 minutes and it would have taken too much time to have pupils do it by themselves.

In some assignments there weren't any good tasks for using patterns or so there was no need for using them.

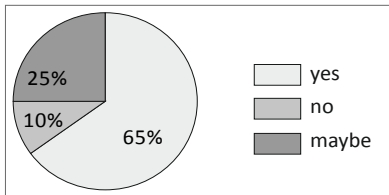
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT USING THE CONCEPT OF PATTERNS IN GENERAL?

The main opinion of the student teachers was that patterns can be useful, necessary, good and helpful to get a better understanding of a certain matter. Thus pupils should be enabled to generalize findings on the topics. Furthermore it would be helpful if they used it in their spare time to create their own patterns on other subjects.

One of the student teachers thought that patterns are only necessary in a certain part of the lesson. Another student teacher had the opinion that patterns are easy to understand. In contrast the different view is that patterns are rather difficult to understand.

As a result of one lesson experience, patterns seemed to be a good idea for teaching for most of the student teachers, but they also think that patterns are difficult to implement. They might be helpful, but you need a lot of time to be able to explain them properly. Another problem is that pupils normally don't generalize too much and it would be difficult for them to understand the correlation.

WILL YOU USE PATTERNS IN OTHER LESSONS IN THE FUTURE? DESCRIBE WHY OR WHY NOT.



Graph 5: "Will you use patterns in the future?"

By posing the final question we wanted to find out, whether the student teachers involved in this project would like to use patterns for planning lessons in the future.

The results showed that most of the student teachers think they will use this concept in the future. 65 % think that patterns are very helpful

for pupils to get a better understanding of topics and problems discussed during lessons. Furthermore they get the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills, which is quite important. 10 % of the student teachers however think that they will not use the patterns in the future. Most of them can't imagine that this is necessary for teaching a class. A quarter of the student teachers were not sure, whether they will use patterns in the future or not.

CONCLUSION

Finally it was a big success for all participants to use patterns in EVE. All student teachers heard about this kind of model for the first time and most of them used it for preparing and creating their lessons. Now they think that patterns are very helpful and necessary tools to reach a better understanding of spatial distributions. It speaks for itself that almost all student teachers think about using patterns in the future.

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

Zdenko Majer, Juliane Röhl

WHAT DO WE MEAN, WHEN WE SAY 'DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING'?

During the first exchange we already explained what was meant by the term 'explanations'. After our first teaching experience in Germany (and in Turkey), the project decided to change the aim and description of this step of the curriculum framework from 'explaining data' to 'deepening understanding'. The intention behind this change was to get a better idea of what was being asked for. In this chapter we want to show, what this change means and how it was put into practice. We will especially focus on the assignments 'Religion and its Influence on Politics and Policies' and 'Devotion to religion and the active citizenship'.

Following Anna Thomson explanations and deepening understanding could be defined as answering 'why' - questions posed with respect to data or facts. We know that there is more than one way to do that. On the one hand, it may be accepted that something is like it is, which means that the main objective is to find out why it is like that. This assumes that the given fact will be independent of the explanation. On the other hand, the fact itself may be disputed. It is more a claim that something actually is the way that a person sees it. Then we usually start arguing.

There are two sides that frame the deepening of understanding. On the one hand there is the question of who I am and what my beliefs are. On the other hand there is the decision-making process and the acceptance of responsibility in relation to questions, problems and themes.

The best way to reconstruct given facts is to become aware of your own individual thinking. If a pupil finds out his or her own attitude towards a theme and maybe also the attitudes of his or her class mates, which could be completely different from the pupil's idea, he or she can better imagine what is hidden behind the opinions shown for different countries in the maps and diagrams. While digging deeper into the themes, pupils will find out similarities and differences between their own opinion and the belief of the society they live in. They should understand that there are different views

even in their own society and learn to accept and respect them even if they don't agree with them. Pupils should find their responsibility within the society. This perception will help them understand and question their place in the places where they live.

The other aspect of the process of deepening understanding is the ability to make decisions and take responsibility, which will help pupils while working on the themes. To find answers to why-questions may help them to find and understand structures and relations between different facts. So they are able to understand, explain and discuss themes. While working on exercises to understand a theme better, pupils are asked to analyse diagrams, charts, texts and maps. These competences will also help them succeed in other exercises in other subjects.

WHICH METHODS CAN BE USED TO FOSTER DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING?

The main method of deepening understanding is still the same as for explanations: answering why-questions by discussing the issues brought up by them. The discussion could be between pupils or between the teacher and the pupils. It is also possible to involve an expert or a person from outside the classroom.

Based on the given structure of deepening understanding in part one, there are different methods for pupils to better understand a theme. Concerning the question of who I am, pupils could find out their own opinion by answering questions, which are based on the theme and can be answered with yes and no. These should be questions the pupils never thought about before. They could answer these questions by using words or, to make it more interesting and diversified, by using coloured cards (as in the traffic light game) or making crosses in a given box. If you want to go one step further the teacher can look at the class as a society in itself: as each pupil symbolises one part of this society, you can calculate an average and draw a diagram to show the results. These activities will also develop the decision-making skills and the responsibility of the pupils, because they make them understand and comprehend the methods used in social studies.

Using this competence from a different perspective, the perspective of explanations as a foundation for decision-making, the pupils are able to interpret diagrams and maps in a more refined way, because they already know about the mode of constructing diagrams and maps. The teacher can use these skills to let the pupils find out about the opinions in different societies, while interpreting the colours of maps or the bar in diagrams. They could also look more critically at facts they find in texts.

After using different methods in relation to the question of who I am and to support decision-making and responsibility in association with different materials, pupils could compare the results of the class (or their own idea) with the real results from society. This could be achieved by asking them to transfer their newly learned skills to another scale. Thus pupils can interpret different diagrams, maps or cross-tables projected on

the wall or shown in the form of posters. The posters are a good means to remind the pupils and teachers of the results of their previous efforts while working on the theme. All these products of the pupils should always be used for a following discussion between the pupils and the teacher. This is the last step to make pupils deeper understand a theme. And it is also a way for the teacher to lead the class to tangible results, because in the end he is responsible for the learning outcome of a lesson.

EXAMPLES FOR DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING BASED ON THE ASSIGNMENTS

The previous chapters discussed what it means to deepen understanding and what methods can be used in order to develop it. The following text, based on an example from the assignment ‘Religion and its Influence on Politics and Policies’, will show what types of assignments can help to deepen understanding.

As mentioned before, the core method to deepen understanding lies in asking the question ‘why’, which is followed by a discussion on the issue. The key aspect of this question lies beyond the process of deepening understanding it lies in the core of the definition of geography as a field science focusing on interactions among individual elements of a geographic area.

Task one can be used as an example of application of this method. In the first segment pupils answer questions regarding their attitudes towards faith in God and hell. In the second segment they compare the answers with opinions of pupils from other countries shown in short video sequences. Their task is to discover differences and similarities in opinions and to try to explain why people agree or disagree.

This task directly provides the teacher with the question ‘why’. The teacher should apply this question in order to guide the pupils towards thinking about their own opinions. When giving reasons for differences and similarities, it is necessary to support arguments with relevant facts that are based on different economic, social, and cultural backgrounds of individual countries and to distinguish one’s own sentiments from objective reality.

Another group of methods that appear valuable for the given issue are methods of developing a personal view and methods that guide students towards decision-making and responsibility. Tasks 5 and 6 may be used as good examples. In general, pupils compare their own opinions on religion and politics with the opinions of pupils in other European countries that are represented in the maps attached below. To be more specific, the following two arguments for pupils to give their opinion may serve as examples: ‘Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office.’ or ‘If a nurse were asked to perform a legal abortion, he/she should be allowed to refuse it based on religion beliefs.’ Pupils should be able to grasp the idea of how they’ve come about with the opinion and what has influenced their decision-making with respect to this specific opinion. By discussing the issue with other pupils and with the teacher they

should realize various motives and experiences that lead to the construction of the different opinions found in the classroom. Finally, using maps, they should compare own opinions with the opinions of people from other countries.

SUMMARY OF METHODS AND RESULTS

Such formulation of the tasks should provide pupils with the understanding of mechanisms that form both their own and different opinions and help them better understand society. In this context they should be able to perceive social decision-making as a process that needs responsibility and a deeper understanding of the problems.

HOW DID WE TRAIN DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING IN SCHOOL?

After discussing the meaning of deepening understanding and the methods that may be used for deepening understanding, it is necessary to look at the process in which the deepening of understanding was developed in practice.

The first step involved gaining an idea of the general level of knowledge that pupils had about a certain topic. In each of the individual schools student teachers filled in a questionnaire containing series of short questions, discussed a chosen topic or used various written methods to voice their opinion on the issue.

The second step specifically involved deepening understanding. Based on the information from the questionnaire, it appears that the most suitable methods were discussions and working with thematic maps. During the discussions, however, it is important for the teacher to lead the discussion in the right direction, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as religion. Teachers should feel responsible to try to avoid the prevalence of emotions in such discussions and encourage the pupils to argue by using real facts. When using thematic maps it is important to teach the pupils to read the maps from different points of view and avoid simplified explanations which promote various cultural and social stereotypes. To achieve this, we tried to develop a number of different possible social, cultural, economic and political reasons which may lead or not lead to the acceptance of religion in peoples' lives across Europe.

The third and very important step required the evaluation of whether we were actually able to develop deepened understanding during the classes we taught. In questionnaire, this question was answered by most of the student teachers with YES. But a closer look reveals that the answers are influenced by subjective evaluations of the pupils' reactions in the class and by analysis of evaluation forms which the pupils handed in at the end of each class. To conclude, the ambition to deepen understanding in class may be considered as successful.

WHAT DID THE PUPILS LEARN FROM IT?

In our lesson in Slovakia we wanted the pupils to engage in the theme ‘Devotion to religion and the active citizenship’. We used the correspondent assignment from the European Values education project. Because of the short teaching time we reduced the number of tasks and pulled together some of the exercises. We used the same way of working with the tasks as described in the assignment: the pupils answered the questions while coloring a table. We have chosen three items relating to the religion (Religion is very important for me; I believe in heaven; I believe in hell) and three items relating to active citizenship (I am concerned with living conditions of human kind; I am concerned with unemployed people rights; I am concerned with sick and disable people). We put all items into one table, so that the pupils could compare their answers and could (maybe) find some correlations.

In the beginning of the lesson we talked about the meaning of the topic and of the different questions and words to make sure that the pupils understand the theme and can get into it. In the working phase at first the pupils marked the answers for the religion items: green for ‘yes’ and red for ‘no’. Afterwards they did the same for the items of active citizenship. Both tasks needed the individual activity of all pupils and should help them, to *become aware of their own level of devotion*.

The next step in this lesson was to compare the results in a short discussion. Could the pupils find correlations between their answers? Did they mark the boxes in the same color? When the pupils explained their own results, they found out and had to accept, that there are completely different possible answers. You may not answer in the same way as your friend or neighbor, because your *level of devotion is related to your own lifestyle and your educational background*. For us this was the most important learning outcome.

To make it more clear for the pupils we asked them to compare their results with the results of the European Values Study. We showed the results of each item in a map projected on the wall and discussed the results with the pupils. We also designed a table in red and green for Slovakia and after this second working phase the pupils could compare their own results with the Slovakian results. On the one hand they asserted that the answers could be different again. On the other hand, they learned how to *evaluate a map*. We also explained that the results of the different European countries were made by using a *representative sample* and that not everyone was asked.

After the second working phase we again discussed the results. The pupils were asked to argue on whether they were ‘typical’ Slovaks or not. It was very interesting for the pupils and of course for us, the teachers. We heard statements like ‘Oh, I’m more a German than a Slovakian’ and used this to make sure again, that the results were here based on the countries, but that they don’t necessarily have to. Also when you are living in a very religious country, you don’t have to have the same level of devotion as most of the other people. Contrary to our topic in Germany ‘People in Need’, where we had the aim to make the pupils aware that there are quite different reasons of people in their environment to be in need and their feelings about it, our aim this time was to

make the pupils *aware of the individuality of each person*, independent of their country. In that way: we achieved our aim. And not to forget, the pupils learning process was organized in a new and open way of teaching, which was up to now unknown to them. But it was successfully implemented anyway.

OUR OWN EXPERIENCES WORKING ON THIS CHAPTER

Writing this chapter was definitely more difficult than writing the last one. I think these complications were based on the fact, that almost all of the student teachers were passing their last exams, writing the last papers at university and already preparing themselves for the following practice time in school at the same time. Because of that, some student teachers were really stressed while working on this chapter.

The other reason for me personally was the change from the German way of learning and organizing things to the way of Slovakian students. When we had the project in Germany, the Germans were the 'leaders' and as is commonly known, Germans like to have everything done in a very structured and planned way. So when we said goodbye in Germany, everybody knew, which part he has to work on and which facts can be used for that. In Slovakia, our Slovakian partners were the 'leaders' of the project, but when we left, we didn't have a real agreement on the further work and we also didn't evaluate the lessons like we did first time. Because of that, we had some problems at home, because we had to get back into the lessons again and this time on our own.

But anyway we had a really good time together in Slovakia. We enjoyed the teaching practice and, of course, the collective events. Both parts of the project were successful and helpful for our own development and experience and none of us would like to miss it.

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING

Daniela Baars, Michal Bajzík, Stanislav Pisarčík and Ines Weiser

WHAT DOES CRITICAL THINKING MEAN?

A famous saying by René Descartes goes ‘Cogito, ergo sum’¹ (meaning: I think, therefore I am). Descartes can be described as an important founder of systematic doubt. Nothing can be certain in this philosophical approach of thinking once there exists any doubt. Systematic doubt is an extreme way of reflecting the apparent reality and of finding an answer to the question ‘Am I?’. The significant achievement of the systematic doubt concept is the usage of doubt as a methodological instrument. In comparison, critical thinking does not mean that one doubts everything, but it rather entails asking questions and therefore trying to get ‘to the bottom of things’.

There seems to be sufficient evidence that an inherent necessity of human beings is to understand their environment. In this context, the environment includes all political, technical, economic, social, cultural, historical and religious aspects that people relate to. Things often seem to work in a certain way or for a certain reason and facts are facts because somebody, perhaps our parents or our teachers, told us that certain things are a fact. But are things or facts the way they appear? It is nearly impossible to find a general answer to this question. However, good examples demonstrating the consequences of a lack of reflection or of thinking processes, especially critical thinking, are the existence of prejudices and stereotypes.

CRITICAL THINKING IN SCHOOL

The curriculum framework used for the assignments is composed of four stages in total. One stage is critical thinking. With the help of critical thinking one is able to scrutinise obvious facts and to ask questions. Therefore, critical thinking is a basic instrument to develop critical citizenship which should be a main aim of school education according to the curriculum framework of the European Values Education project. At first, it is thus necessary to take a closer look at critical thinking as a process and at how pupils

¹ Source: Hollendung, 2001.

can benefit from critical thinking. Secondly, it can be assumed that critical thinking or elements of critical thinking can be found in the assignments and lessons. Hence, it should be researched how the students developed critical thinking during their lessons and whether the pupils were used to it.

CRITICAL THINKING AS A PROCESS

According to Stella Cottrell, critical thinking includes:

- » *identifying other people's positions, arguments, conclusions*
- » *evaluating the evidence for alternative points of view*
- » *weighing up opposing arguments and evidence fairly*
- » *being able to read between the lines*
- » *being able to identify false and unfair assumptions*
- » *recognizing techniques like the argumentative/logic structure*
- » *reflecting on issues in a structured way*
- » *deciding or evaluating whether arguments are valid/justifiable*
- » *presenting a point of view in a structured and convincing way*
- » *identifying and evaluating reasons and conclusions.*

As shown, critical thinking '[...] is a complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range of skills and attitudes'². This wide range of skills and attitudes can be summarised as the ability to analyse and build up argumentative structures and thus detect strengths and weaknesses in discussions as well as in final conclusions.

One of the most interesting questions is how pupils can benefit from critical thinking. According to Elaine Jackson '[t]he thinking skills approach attempts to address underachievement, low self-esteem and limited social interaction skills.'³ Furthermore, pupils can benefit from critical thinking skills through the improved ability:

- » *to read a text/book/message with a certain focus*
- » *to identify the key points/important facts/arguments in a text*
- » *to analyze a situation/text/message*
- » *to form and represent a position/point of view/opinion.*

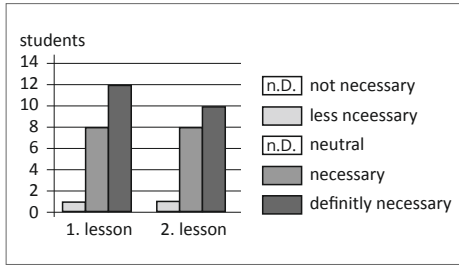
Moreover, critical thinking skills have a positive influence on the attention and observation of pupils. Therefore, one can expect critical thinking to be an important skill that pupils will definitely need for the rest of their lives. It is a necessity for critical citizenship, metacognition and reflection.

² Source: Cottrell, 2005, p. 2.

³ Source: Jackson, 2002, p. 34.

ANALYSING AND EVALUATING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

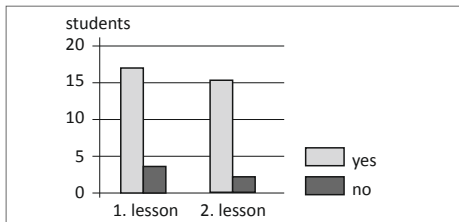
To find out whether the students used critical thinking in their tasks we developed a questionnaire⁴ to be filled in after each group held their lessons. The results will be the focus of the following section.



Graph 1: Developing critical thinking in school

the first and the second lesson. Less students thought that critical thinking was definitely necessary after their second lesson. The reason for that could be that some students generally answered only for one lesson and did not consider the second one as important to this question.

The second graph shows that the majority of students developed critical thinking in their lessons. Those students who answered with 'Yes' gave examples of how they developed it.



Graph 2: 'Have you developed critical thinking in your lesson?'

The first graph shows the results for the question, whether students think developing critical thinking is necessary in school. It can be seen that developing critical thinking in school is seen as necessary or definitely necessary by the vast majority of the interviewed students. Only in one case was it considered to be less necessary for both of the lessons. What is astonishing in these results is that there is a difference between

Students developed critical thinking:

- » *by developing a theory with the help of the Toulmin scheme*
- » *with the help of methods such as brainstorming, discussion and comparing maps*

- » *by talking about differences and similarities which they can find in maps*
- » *with the method of discussion, because this method is very good for critical thinking*
- » *with the maps by making pupils think about, why Protestants, Catholics... live in certain well defined parts of Europe*
- » *by asking them 'why?'*
- » *by making them find some arguments for the reasons they stated.*

Nevertheless, one person answered with 'No' and gave the following reason:

- » *'I tried but the students were not used to it.'*

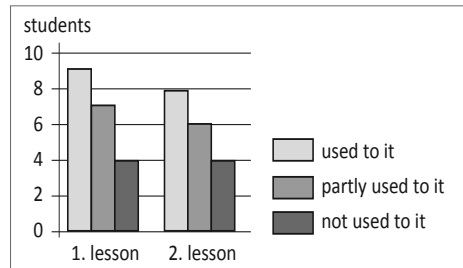
Generally, our students tried to include critical thinking in many different ways.

⁴ A blank copy of the questionnaire can be found in the end of this chapter.

The third graph shows a similar trend like the previous two graphs, which means that the majority of pupils were at least partly used or used to critical thinking. Only in four cases pupils were not used to it, which correlates with the previous ‘no’-answer in the second graph. It is astonishing that in four cases pupils were not used to it, hence, it must have been difficult to actually develop critical thinking in those classes.

INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF THE STUDENTS

The questionnaire gives us a general idea of the students’ results. It shows whether and how they used critical thinking in their lessons. To get a more detailed description of a lesson we interviewed one of our students to get some information about one sample lesson.



Graph 3: 'Where the students used to critical thinking?'

Interviewer: Hello Stanley, can I ask you some questions about developing critical thinking?

Stanley: Hi, yes of course.

I: So first of all, do you think that developing critical thinking is necessary in a school?

S: I can say that it is definitely necessary because pupils should know not only basic information but they should give some arguments why they think so. They must think about the reasons and causes. For example if we have a map and it is possible to see some patterns here, it is not enough to say yes I see them but we have to find some arguments and think about the reasons.

I: Have you developed critical thinking in your lessons?

S: Yes.

I: What was your assignment?

S: Is football as important as religion?

I: Ok. So try to describe how you developed it.

S: This assignment focuses on religious people in the UK and the relationship between being religious and supporting certain football teams. We used two teams from the UK as an example. Then we asked the pupils whether there were any other reasons except religion to choose a football club. They had to write down the reasons on file cards. Afterwards, they tried to develop a theory for one reason.

I: How satisfied were you with the result of this task?

S: I think that for Slovak students it is not so complicated to find other reasons than religion because in my opinion in Slovakia there aren't any relations between football and religion. But I thought that it was a bit complicated for them to be developing a theory. However, I was positively surprised because they gave us really good arguments for their suggested theories.

I: Ok, this is all. Thank you for your time.

S: Bye.

Through this interview we got an insight into one particular lesson. As the student pointed out it is important to develop critical thinking, especially in school. Obviously Slovak students did not have difficulties finding reasons, but developing a theory seemed to be more problematic. Although the student was more or less positively surprised about the result of the lesson, it also demonstrates how important it is to develop critical thinking all the time, and not just in one lesson.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE ASSIGNMENTS

The analysis of the tasks in the ten assignments will be the focus of the following section. As the results of the questionnaire show, the majority of students actually developed critical thinking, according to their answers. Hence, one could expect that some of the tasks in the assignments must have helped them doing so. This section will only deal with meaningful assignments in order to avoid repetition.

In the assignment 'Devotion to Religion and Active Citizenship' the pupils have to open up their minds to what it means to be an active citizen, thus in this assignment the thinking process is built up quite a lot. The final task, the discussion, helps students to scrutinise what they have learnt during the lesson. The teacher's task is to make pupils aware of the role of an active citizen. They have to reflect on their own opinions and compare them with the views of social scientists. Judging from the tasks in this assignment the pupils must have developed critical thinking.

Another good example for developing critical perspectives is the assignment 'Is football as important as religion?'. Although the assignment in some parts seems to

be a little confusing, the two students who had to teach it developed critical thinking very well by using a scheme, the so-called Toulmin scheme, to help pupils finding arguments to support their thesis.

In the assignment 'Is there a Place for every Penguin in Heaven?' the tasks are well structured and it logically develops critical thinking in the way that pupils are asked whether 'homosexuality should be discussed in school'. Here they have to confront themselves with their own views and those of their classmates. They need to tolerate the opinions of the others and find arguments that support their own position towards the topic at the same time.

Dealing with the opinions of others, whether it is a scientist or experts, needs a critical perspective of the pupils which should make them aware of the fact that not everything experts say must necessarily be the one and only correct explanation for a given fact. As already mentioned in the introduction, with the help of critical thinking one is able to scrutinise obvious facts and one is able to ask questions. All tasks that ask for reasons open up the thinking process of the pupils.

In task seven of the assignment 'Religion and its Influence on Politics and Policies' pupils are expected to discuss the topic critically and develop an argument by questioning the degree to which the idea argued for by the author is harmonious with the data in their own country.

However, when analysing the tasks, it was very difficult to find any critical thinking in the assignment 'Secularization in Europe'. It asks for many explanations but pupils never really have to dive deeply into the topic. It contains a lot of text which might make it hard for the pupils to question the given theses. The assignment definitely includes explanations. Pupils are asked for them in almost every task but without having to deal with the topic that much.

Some of the assignments had some remarks in the end that described in detail where pupils were obliged to develop critical thinking. But unfortunately some of those descriptions did not meet the requirements of what critical thinking means, according to the introduction paragraph of this chapter. Finding arguments for one's opinion is very important in all fields of life not only in school, so pupils must be trained to be able to do that.

CONCLUSION

Concluding the analysis of the assignments and the results of the questionnaire it can be said that there were only a few opportunities to develop critical thinking. If there were some tasks that did ask for opinions of the pupils they were either used as a starter to relate to the pupils or to make them more interested in the topic. In those tasks that were supposed to start a discussion critical thinking could possibly be developed but that depended on the teachers and on the students. At least open discussions gave them the chance to develop an opinion and find arguments to support it. Furthermore in such discussions they had to relate their own opinion to that of their classmates

or to that of a scientist or other experts. To conclude from our own experiences while teaching in German as well as Slovak schools, it has to be added that students are not really used to such tasks, probably because it is not practised very frequently. This realization should make us aware of how important it is to teach critical thinking in order to make our pupils understand the world better. A good way to do that is to give teachers as well as pupils a frame or a scheme in order to work with arguments and opinions. As seen in the example of the Toulmin scheme, this method of scaffolding was very helpful for the pupils to get their arguments structured. Not only when teaching values but also in quite general terms it is important to teach our pupils the awareness that they do not take each fact for granted and learn to ask questions and hence develop their own thesis.

DEVELOPING LESSONS ON THE BASIS OF THE ASSIGNMENTS

Pavel Rýgl, Anett Seeger and Anja Strehmann

During the second part of the exchange project some things were changed. We still used the assignments to create the lessons, but the way we chose them and our partners were new: the themes were introduced and given to the Slovak students before the German students arrived and the teams were made up of one Slovak student plus his/her German host. The democratic rules we have had in Germany, where we could choose the theme and our partners on our own, were gone. Because of that the number of the group members declined from four to two while the number of groups increased. This change would help us to work on more themes than we did during the first part of the exchange project in Germany. At that time we chose two of the ten themes, what seemed to be too little for an overall evaluation. The change did work in the way that every theme was taught by one group this time. But it also caused problems that we had not had before, e. g. a distance to the topic because some teacher students did not get the underlying message of the theme, and therefore problems arose when working together on the concept of the lesson. We agreed that these problems did not necessarily result from the new system, but it influenced our motivation, because if someone does not allow you enough freedom of choice, you feel less trust in yourself and your skills. Working in small multicultural groups, this change brought in additional which arose from the different ways that people interpreted the assignments. That in turn means that the authors of the assignment must be very clear on what they want to achieve. They must make sure that the topic is easy to understand and that it has an open-minded approach that leaves room for sensible changes that may be needed in relation to the cultural background of the pupils who work with it. To assure this, it must have well-formulated and concrete tasks, the intention of which should be explained in the teacher information.

On other hand, the user of the assignment must already have an idea about the theme, at least in relation to the underlying theoretical ideas, so that he can develop his own opinion on it. It is important to be able to develop your own lessons on the

basis of the assignments. Therefore for our project it is important to know how students developed their lessons in a pedagogically convincing way. This information is needed, to develop the project further in the future. With the help of a short questionnaire of four questions we wanted to find out how students were preparing their lessons with the help of the assignments. As we wanted to at least try to cover the whole process of working with the assignments, we asked them whether the assignments were helpful in seeing the aim of the lesson and then plan it accordingly, whether they used the material and the teaching information, and how they would like to improve the assignments.

The evaluation of the ten assignments about *religion* will be represented in the following.

WHAT WAS THE AIM OF YOUR LESSON AND HOW HELPFUL WAS THE ASSIGNMENT FOR PLANNING IT?

Each group somehow wanted to show the relations between religion and their topic. Furthermore most wanted the pupils to understand the reasons for different regional distributions of different phenomena. To give a more detailed overview you find the aim for every assignment listed in the following:

- » *Devotion to Religion and Active Citizenship: Find out whether there is a relationship between religion and behaviour.*
- » *How are religions spread across Europe? Show which religions there are in Europe and how they are distributed.*
- » *Is football as important as religion? Find out whether there is a relationship between religion and football and why people support a team.*
- » *Why be religious? Get an idea of what religion means and what reasons are for being religious.*
- » *Lucky Charms: Find out whether there is a relationship between religion and lucky charms.*
- » *'No creo en el jamas' (Juanes): Find out whether there is a relationship between peoples' general religious attitudes, their belief in God and their belief in life after death.*
- » *Religion and its influence on politics and policies. Show the influences to the pupils.*
- » *Secularization in Europe: See differences between state and religion.*
- » *The meaning of religious places: Realize that there are different opinions about religious places.*

You could say that some groups found it easy to illicit these aims from their assignments, some had some problems and some found it very hard. Most of respondents found it easy to develop an aim on this basis of the assignment. They felt that their assignments were very helpful offering them a lot of opportunities to plan a good lesson. The material was made accessible by well considered tasks for pupils and they had clear thematic character. In most cases the aim of the lesson was easy to understand,

but there were also themes where the aim was very open so that it had to be adjusted to the requirements of the practice. It means that after the experiences from first lesson, groups changed the lesson to better suit the pupils in the second lesson.

The second group, that had some problems with finding an aim, said it was due to their impression that some of the assignments had rather non-geographical themes, which made it harder for them to adopt the assignment to a geography classroom. This problem was solved by developing new aims for the lessons. Often, the aim was reformulated after the first lesson. Still the respondents in this group did not have bigger problems with the assignments.

The group that found it hard to develop an aim for the lesson used the assignment only by referring to its name and overall idea. They brought in information from other sources and only used the maps from the EVS. To them the maps were the most important things in the assignment. They valued them as an information base. Maps as a symbol of the geographic sciences are coherent to all geography lessons.

To conclude, in most cases the assignment helped the student teachers to develop their aims. Furthermore they used the material from the assignments, like questions, tasks, maps, cross tables and definitions and the information. Most of the students agreed that the assignments were helpful to get an idea what the topic was about. This was absolutely necessary, because we had only little time for first reading through the assignment and then planning the lesson. So we had to understand the theme very quickly. Therefore most of the assignments were just right.

WHICH TASKS DID YOU CHOOSE FROM THE ASSIGNMENT (WITHOUT OR WITH A LITTLE CHANGE)?

It's difficult to find the group which chose most tasks from their assignment because most assignments were planned for more than one lesson. Therefore one assignment had 18 tasks. But while in this assignment every question is a new task, in another the assignment with 'only' three tasks, a lot of different questions make up one task. This not only makes it hard to compare the assignments, but also creates a need to leave some tasks out. Nevertheless, concerning the question about which tasks the students chose, we would like to start with those groups which used most of the tasks: these were on the one hand the student teachers who worked with the assignment *Is football as important as religion?* This group used all four tasks which were offered in the assignment. On the other hand the student teachers who worked with the assignment *Secularization in Europe* also used many tasks from their assignment, namely four of five tasks (task one, two, three and four). One of these student teachers said that they changed the tasks a little because there were no teaching methods used in this assignment.

Next in the number of tasks used from the assignment is the group who worked with '*How are religions spread across Europe?*' These students took two of the three tasks which were proposed in their assignment. They changed task one a little bit in that they gave

the pupils a blind map of Europe in which they were asked to draw how they thought that the different religions were spread across Europe. Then the pupils were asked to compare their results with a given map and see whether their assumptions were right?

These were the groups which left out no or only one task of their assignment. Then there was one group which left out two tasks of their assignment. These were the student teachers who worked with *Unity in Diversity*, who chose three of the five tasks (task one, two and five). Moreover, in this assignment there is a starter which was used by the group, too.

And then there were the assignments which consist of a lot more tasks than the assignments mentioned before, for example the assignment *Why be religious?* This assignment consists of three parts with twelve tasks: 'religion in Europe', 'religion and identity' and 'comparison to culture'. The students who worked with this assignment decided to use only one of these parts because working with all parts would have been too much for one lesson. So they took the part 'religion in Europe', which consists of seven tasks (task a-g), but the students only used the tasks a, b and d and changed them by introducing different teaching methods.

The assignment *Devotion to Religion and Active Citizenship* consists of eight tasks, and the students who worked with it chose two of them: task three and task six, but they shortened the first task and changed the second one. One of the group members said that they used the tasks as an inspiration.

The group which worked with the assignment *Lucky charms* took three of the 18 tasks (task one, six and 15), and the students who worked with the assignment *Religion and its influence on politics and policies* and those who worked with *Do you believe in life after death?* chose one task only. The group who worked with *Religion and its influence on politics and policies* used one of seven tasks which were proposed in the assignment (task one), but again they changed it, too. Moreover, this group chose a lot of maps from their assignment. The group *Do you believe in life after death?* took one out of 14 tasks, namely task five.

The only group which chose not one single task from the assignment was the group that worked with the assignment *The meaning of religious places*. The only thing they used was the definition of what a religious place is, according to the American geographer Yi Fu Tuan. This definition belongs to task two in this assignment.

Summing this up, you can identify three different approaches: In the first group, you find the students, who used no tasks from the assignments because they had better ideas on how to reach their aim.

The second group did all or most of the tasks exactly as they were or with only slight changes. But it was important, that to do all the tasks in the assignment, they had to have enough time for that. For this group the material was very helpful, because it gave them a very good orientation, as there was a clear aim in the assignment.

The third group of students also often did not change the tasks but chose only a few tasks for their lessons. This could be due to the impression that the theme was hard to

understand, because it was more or less non-geographic, but it could also be seen with easy to understand, but long assignments.

So here we see that one factor that played a big part in all of this was time. Students had to take decisions on what to do and how to do it. They had to agree on the way they wanted their lesson to be and on what information was important for the pupils.

DID YOU WORK WITH THE TEACHER INFORMATION? WHY? WHAT WAS HELPFUL?

Only in two of the working groups both student teachers said that the teacher information was helpful (the group that worked with *Religion and its influence on politics and policies* and the group that worked with *Lucky charms*). One student teacher of the group who worked with the assignment *Religion and its influence on politics and policies* answered that he used the teacher information because it was helpful to plan the lesson and because he got some background information about the topic. The other student teacher of this group noted that he used the teacher information only a little bit, mainly to find out about the aims of the lesson. One member of the group which worked with the assignment *Lucky charms* said that she used the teacher information because it was good to get an overview of the topic and to work out typical things for different countries. The other member of this group answered that she used the teacher information especially because it was helpful for teaching patterns.

One student teacher of the group that worked with the assignment *Unity in diversity* noted that he used the teacher information to improve his understanding of some aspects of the assignment while the other student teacher said that she read it, but that it was not really useful and that she made up her own opinion. It's the same with the groups that worked with the assignments *Do you believe in life after death?*, *Secularization in Europe* and *How are religions spread across Europe?*: one member of these groups answered that she/he used the teacher information while the other member noted that she/he only read the teacher information.

The groups that worked with the assignments *The meaning of religious places*, *Is football as important as religion?*, *Devotion to Religion and Active Citizenship* and *Why be religious?* did not use the teacher information at all. One member of the group that worked with the assignment *Is football as important as religion?* explained that their assignment is only useful for teachers, who work in the United Kingdom and in Ireland and that's why the students didn't use the teacher information.

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED IN THE ASSIGNMENT?

One big recommendation is that the assignments are not planned for 45 minutes. That's why some student teachers had to choose which tasks from the material to include. Some themes are very interesting or difficult and student teachers wanted to use everything that was in their assignment. It would be better for the future if the authors of the assignments face that time problem. Less is sometimes more.

Another important point are the maps and their quality. Their titles are sometimes hard to understand and the representation of the data is not always clear. A good example for this is the map entitled 'How people believe in God?' For us as student teachers it is hard to understand what the map shows. How can we then explain it to the pupils? More information would be very useful.

CONCLUSION

These are the results from our questionnaire. As a conclusion, we can say, that for us as future geography teachers it was not always easy to connect the theme of religion with geography. It would be good if some of the assignments were a little more geographic. It is very hard to develop lessons from an assignment that is not based on geographical concepts. The authors should try to keep this in mind. If that was done, the students generally have no problem with the assignments. Of course, in a multicultural context there will always be difficulties in understanding things at once, maybe also in choosing aims or setting priorities, but clever and sensitive students will find solutions that satisfy all involved in the project.

CONCLUSION FOR FUTURE TEACHING

Katarina Chovanová, Kamil Gembický and Luise Nern

INTRODUCTION

Pupils have changed, but the way of teaching very often has not. Because of that students who want to become teachers receive a completely different education at university than was common many years ago. Consequently, the way of teaching may change in the future as well. Considering the European perspective though, it has to be mentioned that education may differ from one country to another.

The majority of student participants in the ‘European Values Education’-project are going to be geography teachers in the future.

In this chapter our group will try to find an answer to the question, whether the project has any impact on our job as teachers later on; whether we had some new experiences while teaching, whether we will use the assignments we worked on again and in general whether we think that this project was useful for our professional development.

We hold the opinion that for future teaching it is important to learn working in a team and of course find compromises with others. Additionally, teaching in the future should be more than just standing in front of the class or give monologues. Instead we should prepare active lessons, try to teach patterns, find explanations, have interesting discussions and make the pupils think critically. In the two weeks working together in Germany and Slovakia we all gained knowledge through preparing lessons together in a team and through teaching at different schools in the respective country. Whether we think that these experiences were useful for future teaching we will find out in this chapter.

We used a questionnaire, which consists of several items relating to ‘conclusions for future teaching’ in order to find out what the project members think about the exchange. The results of the questionnaire are presented in the following pages.

QUESTIONNAIRE

To get an overview, as mentioned above, our student colleagues filled in a questionnaire comprising four questions:

- » *‘Would you like to use this assignment again in your future job? Why?’*
- » *‘Did you learn anything interesting for your future teaching (methods)? What?’*
- » *‘Do you think this project is useful for your future job? Why?’*
- » *‘What did you learn for your future life from this project?’*

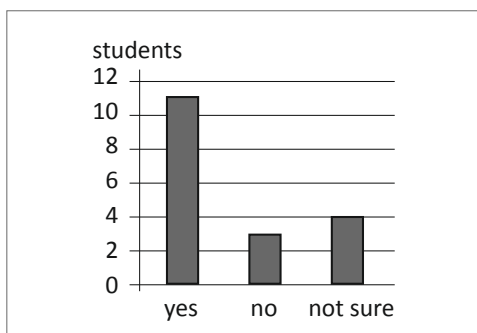
To design this questionnaire was not as easy as it might seem, especially to find appropriate topics. We thought that it would be interesting to find out whether we as future teachers feel that we will ever use the assignments again and whether this project on European values will be useful for our future work and life in general.

The results of the questionnaires are really interesting and most of us answered in a similar way.

USING THE ASSIGNMENTS IN THE FUTURE

The majority of our colleagues state that they will use the assignments again in the future. Reasons given include the fact that students thought that they discussed interesting topics like religion, which can also be important in everyday life in a community. Therefore a detailed discussion about different religions should be part of the curriculum. Furthermore, it was thought important for pupils to express their feelings about their own and other religions. Other reasons cited included one student who said that the assignments are very helpful because they offer pupils the most important information about religions in Europe. They further their understanding because they get a simple overview. They are also useful for teaching about multicultural societies in Europe. The assignments give an impression of the many religions and religious customs you can find in Europe and pupils can learn how to tolerate different points of view.

Only a minority of our student colleagues said that they will not use the assignments again, because they think that some of the topics do not seem to belong into the geography classroom. From their experience at a Slovak school they assumed it might be difficult to transfer assignments like the one on the religious background of some British



Graph 1: 'Would you like to use this assignment again in your future job?'

football clubs to other nations than the United Kingdom. Furthermore, sometimes it was hard to keep the focus on geography.

To sum up, the majority will use the assignments again, because of the maps, helpful tasks and interesting topics. But it is important to find a connection between the topic religion and the subject geography.

HELPFUL EXPERIENCES FOR FUTURE TEACHING

Most students (especially Slovak students) claim that they have learned a lot on teaching methods, when they answered our second question on whether they learned anything interesting. This is because at their university they did not have any courses on teaching methods at all. In contrast to the Slovak students, the German students are well trained in teaching methods. Therefore they could help the Slovaks to expand their repertoire. That is why a lot of groups used teaching methods like brainstorming and diamond ranking. Brainstorming helps to find out what pupils already know and diamond ranking is very useful to foster discussions and make pupils become more active. By including these teaching methods in the assignments we could all practice our teaching skills. In the end it was obvious to all of us that teaching methods are really necessary in modern teaching.

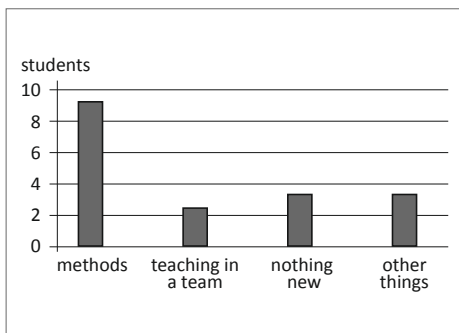
Apart from this focus the question on whether they learned anything interesting was answered in many different ways. On the one hand students said they were trained for improvisation because of technical faults or unpredictable situations. On the other hand one student thought that it was important to experience that ‘every class has a different character; so every lesson is different’.

In connection with the preparation of the lessons students gained knowledge on planning lessons in a team with a foreign partner, which includes dealing with different teaching approaches and is also an important competence to develop for the future.

Furthermore, all of us became skilled at explaining tasks in a few words and making sure that the tasks stimulate the pupils’ critical thinking. Additionally, students

are of the opinion that learning critical thinking is very important, because it is necessary for questioning statements and if possible finding alternative perspectives. One student underlined the fact that critical thinking means falsification and not verification (to affirm statements).

To conclude, the project members had great experiences. For their future teaching, they learned a lot of interesting and new things, especially on teaching methods.



Graph 2: 'What did you learn for your future teaching?'

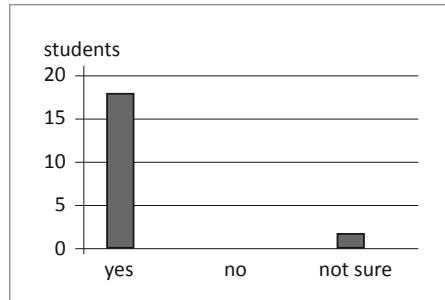
VALUE OF THE PROJECT FOR FUTURE JOB

Finally, there was the question on the usefulness of this project. It is interesting that every project member answered with 'of course, it is useful'. Some students said that it was a great experience to teach in English, while others underlined that they liked the idea to cooperate with foreign partners. One student claimed that this project was a good chance to teach geography differently.

Yet others stressed that 'European Values Education' supports learning important facts about religion in other countries, some of which were new even for us as future teachers.

Still others are of the opinion that this project is useful, because preparing lessons is a teacher's daily work. This should be practised in many ways. In addition to that, being in another country always broadens your view. Students underlined that it was useful to learn about and compare different school systems, in this case the systems of Germany and Slovakia respectively.

To summarize, every student participating in this project was of the opinion that the project was useful for their future and will help us to become more confident as teacher. This is attributed especially to working in a multicultural group. Also teaching foreign pupils is a great experience that every teacher should have.



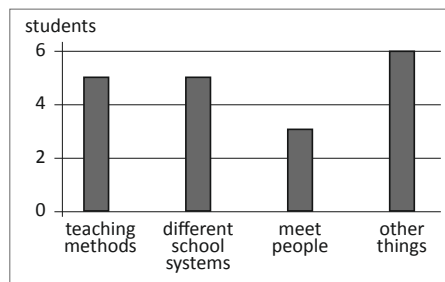
Graph 3: 'Do you think this project will be useful for your job?'

VALUE OF THE PROJECT FOR FUTURE LIFE

Now the question remains whether the student teachers think that the project has any implications on their future life.

The majority declared that they have learned a lot about different states, school systems, teaching methods and also about different people and their culture. Additionally, for the students' future life it is important that they have met nice people and had exchange experiences in general. Also central for future life is learning to be tolerant and to know how to make compromises. These aspects were much in demand in both weeks that we spent working together.

Students also said that they have learned a lot for their future life. On the one hand to cooperate in English and on the other hand to learn that every student has another starting position (basis) from which to work.



Graph 4: 'What did you learn for your future life from this project?'

Furthermore they gained experience in being flexible and open-minded and of course talk about their own expectations and feelings. To sum up, all of us learned much more for our future life from this project than expected.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the introduction future teaching means to prepare lessons which make the pupil become more active and think critical about different topics. Using teaching methods belongs to a modern way of teaching.

This project gave us the opportunity to work with foreign partners at different schools together in a different language. For future teaching it is important to make compromises. It is always useful to learn from each other because everybody has new ideas and different points of view. Surely, this project was useful to make new experiences, gain knowledge and learn interesting things for future teaching.

Especially by observing pupils reactions teachers know how to change their plan. For example which teaching method the pupil like or dislike is interesting for future work with the class.

'European Values Education' is a very good example of how it is possible to work with foreign partners easily and get to know other cultures. For our future work as becoming teachers we can profit from such assignments and opportunities to plan lessons together with professional support from our advisers.

We had the chance to get to know two different school systems, on the one hand the German system, on the other hand the Slovak system. We have seen different education systems and different schools: private schools with very good equipment, and public schools with a different status. To sum up, you can say that this project is really helpful for future teaching.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE about conclusion for future teaching

Class:

Kind of school:

Assignment:

- » *'Would you like to use this assignment again in your future job? Why?'*
- » *'Did you learn anything interesting for your future teaching (methods)? What?'*
- » *'Do you think this project is useful for your future job? Why?'*
- » *'What did you learn for your future life from this project?'*

III. RESULTS OF THE TURKISH-DUTCH GROUP

THE DUTCH SCHOOL SYSTEM

Uwe Krause

One important feature of the Dutch school system is that there are public and so-called special schools. The origin of this division comes from the different political movements like liberals, socialists and Christian-democrats, which had a major influence on the Dutch society in the last century. There is a wide range of types of special schools like Catholic, Protestant and Islamic schools, but also schools based on particular educational philosophies like Montessori, Steiner or more recent initiatives.

The Dutch educational system consists of 8 years of primary schooling, 4–6 years of secondary education and afterwards either vocational training or higher education. Education in the Netherlands is compulsory up to the age of 23 unless people get a degree before that age.

The primary school starts at age 4 and includes two years of Kindergarten. The teachers working at these schools have completed 4 years of study at a special university of applied sciences (PABO). In the last year of the primary education nearly 85 % of the pupils pass an exam, which is called CITO.

There are three main different types of secondary schools.

University preparatory education (vwo) lasts 6 years and leads directly to higher education at universities. Senior general secondary education (havo) lasts 5 years and leads to higher education at universities of applied sciences.

The preparatory vocational secondary training (vmbo) consists of 4 types of schools: a theoretical branch, a theoretical-practical branch and two types of practical branches (according to the level of the pupils). For those who are not able to obtain a diploma there is a fifth option, which consists of only vocational and practical training and has very low theoretical demands. All these types of schools should lead to a kind of qualification for the senior secondary vocational education.

After having finished the preparatory vocational secondary training students are admitted to secondary vocational education and training (vmbo). Most of the studies are combined in regional educational centres (ROC) but there are some specialised schools, which specialise in arts, for example. There are four so-called qualification levels. Students

who have successfully absolved the vmbo will qualify for the second, third or fourth level. The first level is for those, who have not successfully finished secondary education. There are two types of universities for higher education in the Netherlands: so-called research universities and universities of applied sciences. Both universities have a bachelor and master structure. After completing a master degree at the universities it is possible to study for a PhD.

Generally it is possible to switch from one kind of school to the other: for example, pupils from the highest level of vmbo can switch after four years. Senior secondary vocational education and universities of applied sciences have both introduced competence-based forms of learning.

RELATING THE ATTITUDES REPRESENTED IN THE MAPS OF THE ATLAS OF EUROPEAN VALUES TO THE STUDENTS

Marloes Willemse, Sebastiaan Cornelissen, Pelin Turgut

This chapter is about the pupils' need to be able to situate themselves in the discussion about different values and to be able to empathise with a range of other perspectives. The 'relating' aspect is important to make the pupils' own values recognisable and so they can also relate them to the European values. The following part describes how successful every assignment was in regard to relating to the students.

THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS (SACRED) PLACES

In this assignment the pupils were really able to situate themselves in the discussion about different values, opinions and thoughts of different religions. They already did that themselves during the lesson by giving quite good perspectives and different observations for the discussion. The assignment fits really well to the curriculum framework. But it is advisable to adapt this assignment a little because some examples didn't relate to the pupils' neighbourhoods. If examples from their own town or village are used then they will understand it much better because it's related to their personal life and they will recognise it because they see it very often. For instance if you add a picture of a local sacred place to the assignment then it's much easier to talk about it and also much easier for the pupils to give an answer and take part in a good discussion. It's not necessary to adapt the assignment but if it's adapted to the region then it will be better. For example, in schools there is often a place for silence. Like a place where you can think about life and where they have candles for teachers or pupils, who have passed away. When you mention something like that and adapt that into the assignment, the pupils will probably be excited to talk about it because everybody is familiar with it. When the assignment was being checked, the pupils were talking

about the real meaning of the whole assignment and saying exactly what we wanted to hear and that was already after 15 minutes. For example one pupil said after 20 minutes that the real meaning of sacred places was ‘you can say that a building or sacred building is important because of the religion, that’s true but it’s actually just important because of the value **you** gave it’. The assignment is suitable for pupils from the age of 15 because you will get a large amount of input into the discussion. It’s not necessary to adapt the assignment but to relate it to the pupils you have to make it suitable and put in pictures and examples of their hometown or examples at school.

As a conclusion you can say that the assignment is really good if it relates to the pupils.

WHY BE RELIGIOUS?

In this assignment the part about relating to the pupils is really well covered. First they have to think about how religious they are on a scale of 1 to 10. Then a discussion takes place about why you are religious: is it from your culture, why did you choose that religion or why aren’t you religious? They had to relate the facts of the assignment to their own regular life. Some parts had to be adapted to make the lesson more suitable like using the traffic light game so they could better articulate their opinions about that. After that they compared their opinions to the opinions of their classmates and discussed about it in pairs and afterwards they explained why they chose that colour for the given question. In this assignment they have to relate their own values with the values of the rest of the group. After relating it to the rest of the group they will see the differences and similarities of their group compared with the European countries.

SECULARISM IN EUROPE

This assignment was hard to relate to the students. The subject of the assignment is ‘secularism and individualism’, which both are terms difficult to explain and it’s also really hard to relate them to the students. The student teachers carried out a lesson where the Dutch teacher talked about the difference between them and explained the Dutch meaning of the word ‘secularism’. After that the Turkish teacher explained the Turkish understanding of the word ‘secularism’. After that, the pupils had to fill in some examples of individualism in the Netherlands, Turkey and Europe and compare them and write down similarities and differences between both terms. Due to a lack of time the students skipped the example of the Czech Republic because that’s hard for the Dutch pupils and instead chose Turkish and Dutch examples. The text containing words like ‘prediction’ or ‘assumption’ was also quite hard to understand for the pupils. Although they were of a bilingual class, all of the evaluation forms told us that these words were difficult to understand. Easier and more concrete words should have been used because then it’s clearer for the pupil.

YOUTH AND RELIGION ('NO CREO EN EL JAMAS' (JUANES))

The assignment clearly starts with tasks relating to the students. Students thought about their own beliefs and which religious or para-religious aspects influence their own lives. As teachers, we decided to let students talk about differences amongst themselves in order to relate their own values to those of their classmates. This was a task the pupils really liked because for most of them it was a new concept because they had never thought about their beliefs in such a clear manner before. After this first task, the assignment asked them to make a class percentage for each religious aspect in order to compare it to the percentages of German youths. In this third task pupils are clearly asked to relate their own values to those of others, but they didn't. Being taught in the Netherlands, these pupils had little relation to the values of German youngsters. The assignment uses only German results to compare them to other European values, and Dutch pupils knew simply too little about this country's values to truly grasp it. It is difficult relating someone else's values to the bigger picture.

Furthermore, there were some questions in the assignment that seem to ask for an answer coming from a theory even though this theory is not provided. Thus, these questions are hard to answer and in that sense they do not relate to the pupils whatsoever. To summarize and conclude: the start of the assignment did relate to the students very well, but after the first 3 tasks it ceased to relate to them because of the German data. Data used in these assignments should be available for other countries, which was not the case. Instead of using the German data, teachers should be able to use the data gathered from the classroom and relate that to European values.

FOOTBALL & RELIGION

The assignment starts off with a story about football and how this is connected to religion. It discusses English football teams and assumes pupils will be familiar with them. In this way, the different tasks supposedly relate to the pupils. While this lesson was being taught, it became clear that pupils were not at all familiar with the football teams. If this assignment is meant to be taught in different European countries, only the real football fans might be able to relate to the subject, but even then it would still be quite far away from their own daily experience. For most girls, the subject was de-motivating because they disliked it. In this sense, this assignment failed to relate to students.

When advancing with the assignment, it is assumed that pupils have knowledge of religious conflicts in the history of Britain and Ireland, which does not necessarily have to be the case for pupils in other European countries. Teachers will have to give some explanations on this matter, which will be time consuming and unpractical when working with the assignment in the time given. In teaching this assignment, it appeared that there are a lot of pupils who are non-religious and have little knowledge

of religious differences. This should be taken into account when teaching this subject. Adaptations for this assignment can be made when using national football clubs as examples, but even then football as a subject does not appeal to everyone.

While students are asked to see if there is a relation between football and religion, the assignment lacks tasks that really aim for the pupils to relate their own values to European values.

In its current form, this assignment is aimed at those that under Britain. Teachers will have to prepare adaptations with different data and football clubs to really relate the subject to the pupils.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

The assignment starts off by giving pupils the chance to express their religious beliefs. This helps pupils to participate in the lesson, and thus, relate to the topic on a certain level. If teachers were to take time to ask for specific personal examples about these different religious beliefs, the assignment would be even more effective in relating to the students. To further develop this aspect of the assignment maybe some pupil case studies could be given to students and then they could be asked for comments or similar examples. Overall, pupils had to think about their own opinions on religion and politics throughout the whole assignment. There are several tasks in which the pupils are asked to compare their opinions on both religion and politics with the general views of different European countries.

In relating their own values to the values of different European countries, pupils should be given some more time. In case teachers have only one hour available to work with the assignment, choices should be made. It proves to be quite difficult to handle both these subjects, even though they are both important factors in the curriculum framework. Student teachers found that it was possible to skip the introduction questions on personal beliefs, but start off by working with the maps and ask for their opinion later on. This had a positive effect in the learning outcome, even though it is less effective in relating to the students. Overall, the assignment itself relates to the students in an understandable way and has enough tasks in which pupils are asked to relate their own values to those of different European countries.

PENGUINS IN HEAVEN

Considering the part of the curriculum framework on relating to the pupils, which was found to be clear and sufficient in terms of the explanations provided, the assignment was reported to not easy to relate to. Despite of an attempt to relate the assignment to the pupils via an article on gay penguins, it was still found to be too abstract. Some pupils expressed complaints that they had nothing to do with homosexuality. Regard-

ing these comments, the student teachers reported that they needed to make some adaptations in order to make the assignment to better relate to the pupils. Therefore, they included the traffic light game into their teaching of the assignment. In this game the pupils were asked several questions, which were ‘whether they would mind having a homosexual person in their neighbourhood’, ‘whether they would mind having a homosexual person in their family’ and ‘whether they would mind being raised by a homosexual couple’.

This adaptation in the assignment was reported to have yielded productive results. The game appealed to the pupils’ lives and helped them to think about the issue from a personal view, which made it possible to gain their attention and to relate the issue to their life.

LUCKY CHARMS

The assignment ‘Lucky Charms’ was found to be clear and adaptable by the student teachers in terms of the way it relates to the pupils. They reported the assignment to be quite clear to them and that how to relate it to the pupils was openly stated at the beginning of the assignment with some thought-provoking questions for pupils. The assignment was found to be successful at engaging the pupils. However, the implicit assumption in the assignment that all the pupils already knew what a lucky charm was, turned out to be unrealistic. The assignment itself does not have any definitions, explanations or any tasks to make the pupils discover what a lucky charm is although all the tasks are based on this concept.

The student teachers reported that the pupils needed some definitions and explanations; they decided to make some modifications and add explanations to relate it to the pupils. They expressed that by giving the pupils examples, explanations, and a chance to speak more rather than to give written answers in the assignment papers, they were able to better relate the assignment to the pupils. They were also able to attract their attention and evoke their curiosity with a real example of a lucky charm (evil eye).

For the development of the assignment, it was suggested by the teacher students that the age and language level of the pupils should be considered while preparing activities to relate to the pupils.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The way the assignment ‘Unity in Diversity’ relates to the pupils was found to be clear and obvious by the student teachers. Modifications were made, which also included the omission of the tasks regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina due to the class level of the pupils and time restrictions in the assignment. The evaluation of the assignment by the student teachers is as follows: ‘In the original assignment, relating to students

is designed in a way that the activities do not just give students the information, but that they are first given a chance to think and guess and then discover the actual data.' Concerning how the assignment relates to pupils, it was also stressed that the assignment gives the pupils the freedom to choose which country's religious structure to study in one of the tasks. Moreover, it was put forward that the presentation of the background information on the Bosnia and Herzegovina exercise might make the topic more interesting or help the pupils participate more actively in the exercises. This was not tested however since these exercises were not used during the lessons. Furthermore in the evaluation, it was stated that the assignment also relates to the students because of its frequent questions leading to classroom talks, which are useful to include pupils' opinions in the lesson. The tolerance test (task 5), which can be followed by a discussion includes many of these questions. In order to improve the way the 'Unity in Diversity' assignment relates to pupils, it was proposed that a task asking the pupils to put themselves in the role of the new neighbour in task 5 would foster more empathy, which would also serve the main aim of the assignment.

RELIGION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

This assignment starts by asking pupils for their religious beliefs. This aims at involving the pupils in the assignment but student teachers found that these questions, instead of really relating to the pupils, they more or less ask pupils to simply say 'yes or no'. Given the fact that none of the pupils taught really was religious, the assignment more or less failed to relate to the pupils. Instead of having pupils fill in the tables, teachers could use the traffic light game.

Furthermore, the assignment continues with a wide range of charts in which pupils need to fill in both their religious beliefs and their participation in society. Depending on the age of the pupils, these tables more or less relate to the pupils. The tables themselves are interesting in the sense that they ask pupils about things that have to do with their daily life, but unfortunately the results are not explicitly discussed. Filling in these tables one after the other was found to be a relentless task by the pupils, but it was necessary for the build-up of the assignment, which means it is difficult to adapt. Since it takes quite an amount of time to fill in all these tables correctly, the assignment is not suitable for a one-lesson plan.

Later on in the assignment pupils had to relate their own values to European values. This element of the assignment proved to be quite effective since the pupils truly think about the similarities and differences between their own views on politics and religion, and those of other European countries.

Overall, the assignment did succeed in relating to the students and with a little creativity from the teacher it can be made more effective.

TEACHING PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Femke Knoop, Fethiye Erbil, Mustafa Ertürk

OUTLINE

Teaching patterns and trends are important issues to be careful about while implementing the assignments in a classroom environment. That's mostly because the assignments include lots of patterns and trends that need to be correctly understood by the pupils so that using the assignments you can reach the aims mentioned in the curriculum framework.

In the following paper you will find information about how the teaching of patterns and trends was achieved with the religion assignments. Firstly, we will take a closer look at patterns and trends as they are defined in the curriculum framework. Secondly, we will explain why it is important to use patterns and trends in the assignments. Then we will describe why the teaching of patterns and trends is important (or not, if it be the case). We will then show how the teaching of patterns and trends features in the original assignments and show the strengths and weaknesses using examples from our experience with the assignments. Then we will describe how the student teachers adapted the assignment in order to teach patterns and trends and we will give some examples of how they taught it in the classroom and what methods they used to do so. Finally we will present some suggestions of how the assignments could be improved.

DEFINITION

Teaching patterns and trends can be interpreted in many ways. So in order for us to understand its meaning in the context of this project we will use the definition given in the curriculum framework teaching about patterns and trends is explained as follows:

Describing differences (and recognising similarities) – *Pupils need to be able to recognise patterns and trends as they appear in the maps of Atlas of European Values. These patterns*

may be, for example, spatial, social, cultural or economical, and as such pupils may require some specialist support (either through their teacher or through engagement with relevant theories and ideas) in recognising, and identifying them.

For most of the student teachers this explanation in the curriculum framework was really clear. They say they understand what is said in the framework, but they were not really clear about how the teaching of patterns and trends was put into practice in the assignments. For them the assignments were a bit too vague about how this should be done.

The thing they missed (in the curriculum framework or maybe also in the oral explanations of their lecturers) was a guideline on how to teach these patterns and trends in the classroom. In some assignments it was clear but in others it was not as clear (as we will see later).

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT (OR NOT) TO TEACH ABOUT PATTERNS AND TRENDS? WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF TEACHING PATTERNS AND TRENDS?

We think it is important to train pupils to recognise patterns and trends. There are several reasons that can be put forward to support this view.

- » *Firstly, if pupils are able to see the differences and similarities between countries, they will perhaps start to wonder, why things are different (or similar) in some places. At least, that is what seems to be expected, if you look at the tasks following the consideration of patterns and trends in the assignment. The aim is to make the pupils curious about these differences and similarities and to make them discuss about them. They should become more open minded, more understanding of other places and other cultures and realise that the world is full of different places and views other than their own.*
- » *Once they are aware of these ‘cultural’ differences they will also be able to communicate with others more easily, which will be a huge advantage for them in their lives. This is a good way to make them see differences and similarities they have not been aware of before. Often you only see differences when you visit or communicate with people from other places and it seems better if you have an idea of the differences before you go.*
- » *Also if they have to look at the differences and similarities and they are stimulated to see patterns and trends in this, they will be able to explain these differences and similarities. They will be able to see, why these patterns and trends exist. It is about developing their knowledge.*
- » *Another point that is really important about the teaching of patterns and trends is that it develops a lot of different skills. This is not something they can just fill in and don’t have to think about. They will have to go through some distinctive steps*

when they have to describe patterns and trends: They will have to know where to look, they will have to compare different maps and then they will have to look for a pattern in them. This can be quite hard for some pupils as these skills seem not to be used very often.

- » *Finally, after the whole procedure they should reflect on what they have done and how they have done it. This might then lead to critical thinking.*

All these different reasons can actually also be considered as weaknesses of the approach because of all the different steps and skills pupils need. Some pupils will find patterns harder to see than others. But we can question this critique because maybe it is not a bad thing to also learn such skills, which are not trained very often.

HOW WERE PATTERNS AND TRENDS OFFERED IN THE ORIGINAL ASSIGNMENTS?

When the student teachers received the assignments, they all saw that there were some patterns in them, which they could use in the classroom.

In most of the assignments the tables and maps are supported by tasks that should help the pupils to recognise patterns and to draw conclusions from them.

WHAT DID THE STUDENT TEACHER CHANGE IN PRACTICE? HOW DID IT GO?

The very first problem that the student teachers had was about the ‘Teacher Notes’. They were expecting more explanations about the patterns, some practical clues for the classroom implementation or even some hints for using the maps with the help of technology. However, in most of the assignments, the teachers’ notes on describing patterns were not detailed enough and sometimes they were not useful at all. Also the explanations given in the teachers’ notes about the tables and the maps were considered to be too complicated for the pupils. The level of English in the assignments is high and too sophisticated for the pupils.

Furthermore, the assignments assume that the pupils are experienced in reading maps, graphs and so on. However, in our classes, it turned out that there are always a few pupils who don’t know how to read the maps and draw conclusions. So, at some point, the pupils were confused and slow in understanding what the maps meant and how to complete the whole task.

When this happened, the student teachers had to introduce some adaptations. For example, they divided the task into smaller parts to make the sequence of steps needed more explicit. This made it easier for the pupils to follow and to understand.

Another strategy that the student teachers used was that they gave the explanations first and then asked questions to see whether the students got the instruction right. Some student teachers used games like the traffic light game to help students interpret the graphs and tables. This way, they made pupils look at the maps more closely and compare them. The pupils were asked to hold up the green card if they saw a pattern in these maps or a red card if they didn't see a pattern.

Also the student teachers simplified some of the explanations by repeating them in other words. When they realised that there were pupils lacking the basic skills, the student teachers first taught them what the maps were showing.

Some criticisms coming from the student teachers were that sometimes there were too many maps and they didn't have enough time. So, they had to skip some tasks and also some maps and graphs to fit the assignment into the time schedule. This brought with it the difficulty of deciding which tasks they definitely had to keep. They would have liked some alternatives being prepared for the student teachers to make it easier to adapt the whole assignment in different lessons with different time restrictions. Because of these restrictions the student teachers felt they didn't have enough time to go into detail and to discuss the issues with the pupils.

Another criticism about the usage of maps and tables in the assignments was that the people who prepared the assignments sometimes seem to have misinterpreted the maps. Also, some maps and tables included seemed unnecessary.

The student teachers advised that maybe next time, the maps should be prepared and printed in a better way because sometimes pupils had difficulty in understanding them just because of their appearance on the paper.

The lecturers who prepared these assignments seemed to have assumed that all the pupils would know the names of the countries on the map. However, in practice, it was clear that some of them didn't know. This is acceptable when we bear in mind that they are secondary school students. So, it would be better, if the names of the countries were provided on the maps as well. This is what the student teachers suggested generally. Student teachers had this problem in Turkish schools as well.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING PATTERNS AND TRENDS

As we can see from the instances and explanations provided above, there is a certain need for improving the teaching of patterns and trends in the assignments. This need mainly arose due to two reasons: the first reason can be traced back to the organisation and nature of the patterns and trends in general. The second one is mainly due to the mismatch between the intellectual levels of the pupils and the structure of the patterns and trends in the assignments. In the following paragraphs you will find specific suggestions to make the teaching of patterns and trends more applicable and feasible.

The first suggestion is that there should be some guidelines as to how to make use of patterns and trends in the assignments. Although the patterns and trends are structured

quite well on the whole, pupils in the classrooms had some problems in understanding how to make sense of the patterns and trends. That is why it might be a good idea to have some useful, clear guideline which indicates the way the pupils should make use of and interpret patterns and trends. We saw that, for example, some pupils did not know how to use maps and interpret them. This might also be traced back to the intellectual levels of students because clearly some of the assignments could not be implemented with the target group of pupils stated in the assignments. The teacher students believe that it might be a good idea to have these kinds of guidelines just to avoid this kind of a problem. One way to achieve this may be by providing tentative patterns and trends. An example is that pupils could be asked to do some kind of interpretation work before they move on to the real tasks, which include patterns and trends in the assignment.

Secondly, most of the student teachers indicated that they preferred to have pupils interpret the patterns and trends themselves. In other words, instead of directly explaining what is shown in the maps, graphs and tables, they firstly asked them what they saw in the maps and what they believed these maps etc. indicated. However, they state that students were not successful at drawing conclusions and making generalisations using patterns and trends. Nevertheless, we also know that it is not a good idea to present information directly to pupils for the purposes of this project. That is why we believe that providing student teachers with some useful hints how to encourage pupils to find the information on patterns and trends on their own might be a good idea. In this way, we would not only realise deductive learning but we would foster critical thinking as well. Additionally, student teachers can fall back on these hints when students get stuck while interpreting patterns and trends.

Thirdly, student teachers point out that pupils, especially young ones, have a hard time understanding the academic language presented in the assignments, even the term 'pattern'. So the language used in the tasks that include interpretations of patterns and trends could be simplified just to make sure that student teachers will not lose time explaining the terms present in the assignments.

And finally, we believe that it is not really a good idea to ask students to find patterns and trends in maps, graphs etc. when there are no patterns or trends.

We believe that if patterns and trends are organised and structured in light of the suggestions we presented above, the teaching of them will be a lot more feasible and applicable.

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

Seda Akpinar, Desiree Maas, Anneke Rooth

In every assignment we used maps from the Atlas of European Values. We did quite different things with the maps: we compared them to see differences, similarities and patterns in European values and tried to draw conclusions from them, to answer question like: Is a more religious country less tolerant towards homosexuality? Is there actually a link between poverty and religion? But: did the pupils get a chance to find answers to these questions in the assignments? Did the pupils get information about the scientific theories behind the patterns in the maps? This chapter deals with the ‘why’- questions and the explanations given to the pupils.

Deepening the understanding is an important aspect in both the assignments and the teaching because it is like a bridge between teaching patterns and trends and critical thinking.

Deepening the understanding is one of the stages described in the curriculum framework. However, for the student teachers this part seemed rather vague. There were irritations about what the difference was between deepening the understanding and developing critical thinking

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A very important thing about deepening the understanding is of course to have good background information. If a teacher or student teacher doesn’t have any knowledge of the subject, they can never help the pupils to deeply think about it. Especially when comparing two maps, you should have a clear idea of you want them to think about. Also the teacher should think about possible explanations himself. To give an example, in the assignment entitled ‘The meaning of religious places’ there was a question: ‘Do you know any sacred places?’ Most pupils came up with ‘churches’ or ‘mosques’ or other places of worship. Only after telling them they should try to look closer to their homes and that it does not always have to be a building some pupils came up with ‘my own room’, ‘my house’, ‘a necklace of my passed-away grandfather’. A teacher can

also tell them an example of what is an important or sacred place for him. This will lead to better understanding of the theory, at least in the sense of how some of the student teachers interpreted deepening the understanding. The pupils who took part in the lessons, in which this assignment was used, came to the conclusion that every place can be a sacred place; it depends on the meaning you ascribe to it. Some would probably argue that the actions of the student teachers as described here are more a way of relating to the students.

The most important source to find explanations for what is seen in the maps of the Atlas of European Values should have come from the background information delivered by the sociologists of the University of Tilburg. However, the first version of the paper (in this publication you will find the version, which was adapted due to our critique) offered explanations based on modernisation and secularisation theories, but was written in a very abstract way and from the point of view of Western Europe. The Turkish students especially had enormous problems in understanding the concept of secularisation in this text because in Turkey secularisation is understood in a very different way: not as getting less religious or getting less attached to churches or mosques but as the separation between religion and public life.

EXPLANATIONS DURING THE LESSONS

Deepening the understanding is closely related to the pupils' age and their competences in understanding and interpreting the maps and also complex theories like modernisation or secularisation. When pupils have a general picture about cultural differences and for example economical or religious patterns, they are more capable of explaining the underlying reasons for differences and similarities.

In some of the classes, the students were able to come up with their own explanations very quickly. For example, in the assignment 'Secularism in Europe', the pupils were presented with the map 'Do you believe in God?' and they had to explain why in some countries many people believe in God whereas in others there are fewer people who believe in God. The pupils said that it could be due to the fact that some countries are more collectivist and religion can be seen as one of the ties, which they have as a group. One pupil commented that a country's economic situation could also affect the belief in God. Poor people can find a feeling of security in God, so in poor countries more people believe in God than in rich countries. Others argued that the differences between the countries could be caused by globalisation and mobility. When people have the chance of meeting different people and religions, they reflect their own values and beliefs and this could affect their belief in God.

At the beginning of the assignment entitled 'Why Be Religious?' there is a map on the question: 'Do you believe in God?' and Turkey is shown in a very dark colour, which means that a lot of people believe in God. The students immediately said that it is because of the fact that there are a lot of Muslims in Turkey, so the country was perceived as more religious than

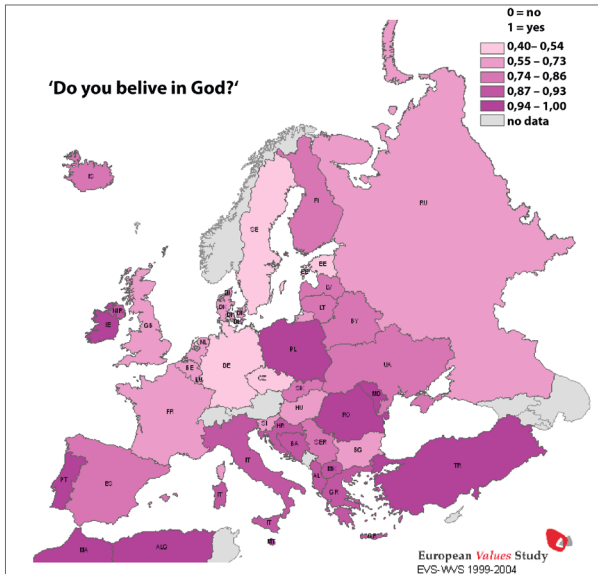


Figure 1: Secularism in Europe

the Netherlands. But would that also offer an answer to the amount of religious people in Poland or Romania?

In another assignment entitled ‘Unity in Diversity’ the pupils were presented with a map and a table and they were asked to provide some explanations for the situations. The map showed the ‘percentage of people who would not like to live next door to Jews’ and it can be seen that many European countries are tolerant of Jews, but people in Turkey generally do not want a Jewish neighbour. The pupils asked if there was a war between

Israel and Turkey and the student teachers said that there was no war, but it was due to the tensions between Israel and Palestine. After this information, the student teachers directed the discussion towards why other European people do not mind having a Jewish neighbour and it was said that it could be due to the Second World War and the lesson that people learned from the war.

Another task from the same assignment was about describing the religious structure of different countries, so the pupils thought about the heterogeneous religious structure of the Netherlands. In this part it was a bit difficult for the pupils to formulate their own explanations hence the student teachers had to lead the discussion by asking some questions related to the history of the Netherlands. After receiving additional information, the pupils started to think more deeply and one of them drew the attention to the developments in the sciences and said that as people know more and more, they stop believing in supernatural powers and a creator.

While using some assignments the student teachers offered some explanations directly to the pupils due to the short time available. A good example of this comes from the assignment ‘Why Be Religious?’ In the assignment there is a part about individualism and collectivism. The pupils were to read a list, which named characteristics of individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and then to choose three collectivistic countries from the map. The map was a bit difficult to use because these concepts were too abstract for the pupils. Even though they understood the pattern, they needed more explanations of why Turkish people are more collectivistic than Dutch people. Hence, the Turkish student teacher gave some examples herself by saying that she was still living with her family and being in a group and working together was very important for her. She also added that it was a dimension rather

than two opposite poles. This short information was very helpful for the pupils to understand the reasons behind the data and they were able to state why Dutch people are more individualistic.

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING IN SOME ASSIGNMENTS

In our view there wasn't enough attention given to the deepening of understanding in some of the assignments. Here are the critiques of the individual assignments.

'Religion and Active Citizenship': There were not many comments on the complete assignment. However, the time limitation undermined a deeper discussion on the subject. Some of the first tasks and activities can be omitted or shortened so that there is enough time for meaningful discussions. On the other hand, if the information or explanations at the beginning are not made sufficiently clear, the discussions will not be efficient either. Therefore the balance is of crucial importance: if you have no time for explanations at the beginning, the discussion will probably not have the desired outcome. If you spend too much time at the beginning, the discussion part will not go into as much depth because of lack of time.

This problem was also mentioned for the assignment about 'Religion and Politics'. Explaining maps can deepen the understanding and just because some of the pupils had some difficulties using the maps, the student teachers had to explain the maps themselves. For the future it could be an idea to give some information on how to use a map as a source in the assignments like the assignment entitled 'Is there a place for every penguin in heaven' did. This will lead to more time for discussions and formulating arguments to deepen the discussions about values and explanations. There was also a task to practice the deepening of understanding in this assignment, but it was too long to use in a regular lesson of 45 minutes.

The assignment entitled 'Why be religious?' seemed to have posed the most difficult problem. This assignment was about 'individualism and collectivism' and the pupils (13–15 years old) couldn't make any sense of these words. Without clarifying the meaning of these words, it was impossible to reach the aim of deepening understanding. Because of the necessity of explaining these words, there was so little time left that it was no longer possible to go through the tasks in more depth.

The last assignment that had problems regarding the deepening of understanding was about 'Lucky charms'. There is a really good part in this assignment that gives a lot of information about lucky charms in different countries. This was supposed to deepen the understanding of the pupils. But there was a lot of reading and explaining, so the student teachers had to skip that part in their lesson.

We can see now that the understanding was deepened in most of the assignments. To improve the assignments the tasks should be shortened and be more specific.

CONCLUSION

The deepening of understanding is an important step before pupils can start to think critically. But thinking at a deeper level also requires some qualities of the teachers and students. As a teacher you should think about the question, what you want them to know and what you think, they already know. Not every pupil has the same level of thinking. Some of them found it hard to see patterns in maps or tables. So you should pay more attention to that before pupils can start thinking deeply. If you know, the pupils will have difficulties with the meanings of words or explaining the maps, you should think about the rest of the lesson: are we able to make them think deeply or are we just going to search for the patterns and trends? Some pupils are just too young to find out the link between religion and active citizenship. But a teacher should also be prepared to answer questions of the pupils, for example: 'Why is a religious person in Turkey less active in the community?'

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING

Elif Zeynep Azar, Çağlayan Erdönmez, Desirée Verscheijden

Developing critical thinking is one of the four components of the curriculum framework on which the assignments and classes were based. In this section, after explaining what critical thinking means in the context of the curriculum framework, we will explain how it was used in the assignments and in the classrooms, and how student teachers could be sure that pupils think critically.

CRITICAL THINKING IN CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

In our understanding the aim of curriculum framework in developing critical thinking skills is to raise the awareness of pupils that ideas and beliefs, as well as the data representing these values may be subjective. To be able to really understand the messages expressed in these data, pupils should comprehend this subjectivity by questioning the reasons lying behind it.

A GENERAL LOOK AT CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is a skill that pupils have to develop to become critical citizens in society. It is very important for pupils to think critically because they live in a world where they are overloaded with a lot of information because of the opportunities of the internet and other media sources. Before they can develop critical thinking, they need to have some knowledge of the subject matter. One difficult aspect is the relationship between the development of critical thinking and the age of the pupils. Most of the assignments were tested with pupils in secondary schools of the ages between 12 to 18 years old. For pupils in lower classes especially the skills needed were totally new. At this age the pupils were taking most of the things they had learned for granted. Because the level of critical thinking has to increase every year, the teacher plays an important role as a coach in supporting this process. The pupils have to learn critical

thinking step by step and the teacher or the assignment has to ask them a lot of ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘why there’ questions to get there. There also have to be varying scales in the assignments, that is to say they should include an individual, a class, a country and a European level. Because of this aspect all the student teachers concluded that working with the ‘traffic light game’ was very successful. The pupils had to develop an opinion of their own about one of the value aspects mentioned in the maps. Every pupil had a green card to agree with the statement and a red card to disagree. With only two options they really had to choose and this was convincing. Sometimes the student teacher could also give the pupils an extra yellow card for those who were neutral in their opinion. After the statement was shown or read out the pupils had to choose the card of their opinion and could also see the opinions in the whole class. At this stage they could search for explanations at a personal level and at a class level and from there could move to a comparison with the data for their own country. After this, they took a look at the maps and saw the differences or similarities shown for the countries of Europe. They could then look for explanations in different fields like political-historical aspects, economic development, the level of modernisation, the level of globalisation, the level of individualism or collectivism and other cultural factors.

HOW CRITICAL THINKING TAKES PLACE IN THE CLASSROOM AND SOME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Although critical thinking is a highly cognitive skill and hard to observe directly and therefore to measure accurately looking at the changes of ideas (if there are any) throughout the lesson could give student teachers an impression of what might be going on in pupils minds.

In the evaluation forms filled in by the student teachers there were mainly three answers to the question on how to develop critical thinking skills: 1) the assignment was not helpful for developing critical thinking, 2) there could have been some critical thinking activities if we had had time to cover all the tasks and 3) the assignment was fruitful in terms of critical thinking only when developed and adapted by the student teachers.

An example for assignments not being really helpful is to be found in the assignment entitled ‘Football and Religion’. Although it claimed to foster critical thinking, it actually did not. The reason is that the assignment was too controlled. A comment by the student teacher, who used this assignment, was: ‘The assignment gives a theory and then with the questions and a table and a map, it refutes the theory itself. There is no place for students to question anything. I realised this after we did the first lesson.’ After realising this, the student teacher asked pupils ‘why’- and ‘how’- questions to elicit more discussion.

When we consider the option, that students had to adapt the assignments to make the implicit strategies of developing thinking skills more obvious, the main ways that

student teachers did it was in the form of relating the topic to the pupils. This was achieved by asking individual questions about their own values in relation to the topic and playing some fun games to draw their attention and to simplify the tasks. Also sometimes examples were given to explain some of the more difficult concepts such as collectivism vs. individualism, secularism and globalism.

The student teachers could determine whether there had been critical thinking by looking at the changes in the ideas at the end of the lesson. For example, for the assignment entitled 'Religion and Politics' a pupil stated that he had expected Turkey to answer 'yes' to the question 'Do you think religion should have an effect on politics?' although the answer was 'no' according to the related map. The reasons for this assumption were that firstly the student thought of Turkey as a highly Islamic country and secondly on the map related to the question 'Do you believe in God?' the average answer for Turkey was 'definitely yes'. However, on the maps related to politics Turkey did not look like it would welcome religious influences on politics. The fact that the pupil was able to realise that his or her assumption and the measured reality were different was a sign of critical thinking.

Pupils' evaluation forms filled in at the end of each teaching session were another way of being sure that there was a development of critical thinking. A collective comment of pupils about the lessons was that discussing some data and maps instead of listening to a plain lecture was both fun and an efficient way of teaching. As long as there was a discussion, pupils had a chance to compare and explore reasons for the differences in the values. They also stated that they liked learning about different countries, which they usually do not do in their geography classes.

Another example is that in one of the assignments the main aim was explicitly to lead the pupils to think critically and at the end to reach the conclusion that the meaning of religious places might change depending on the way people view them. Normally one may think that pupils might be hesitant in talking about their religious views but thanks to the fact that the lesson in which we taught the assignment was a religious education lesson, students were really interested in the subject. Otherwise it could have been difficult to elicit the critical responses from the pupils. The pupils' evaluations indicate that we needed more time to think critically about the topic. It turned out that critical thinking is possible only out after a certain process of developing competences. So pupils first need to build up the background knowledge about the topic to be able to make a critical comment. It takes time to build links between different elements or aspects related to the meaning of religious places. All in all, the assignment reached the desired aims in terms of eliciting critical responses. For example, one student could summarise the whole point of the assignment in one single sentence: 'You have to think about why things can be important or sacred to some people when they actually mean nothing to you.' The pupils indicated that even if some of them were not religious or did not have anything to do with religious beliefs they had a good time discussing the meaning of religious places. They could infer from the assignment that religious places are not just sacred because they have a religious

value and because they are said to be important because of the existence of a divine power, but also because they might have 'scenic' or other values. For example, some pupils used to view churches as places, which only have a sacred value for religious people. However, during the lessons they realised that churches are also sacred places for themselves for other reasons. Students said they liked to talk about the different meaning of places.

It is actually hard to assess the level of critical thinking of the pupils. We thought that another way to see if the students could think critically was by asking them whether they had changed their previous opinions after the lessons. For example, after the assignment entitled 'Religion and Active Citizenship', we observed that the pupils modified some of their opinions regarding how they view the relationship between religion and active citizenship. The assignment first asked if there was a relationship between religion and active citizenship. The majority of the class said they did not believe in any God and therefore they did not see any relationship between religion and critical citizenship. To summarise their opinion before the lesson, they simply did not believe in the supremacy of religion. When they were asked who was religious and who would say they were concerned about unemployment, there were just a few students positive about both questions. Actually, the majority of the class accepted that they would be concerned about unemployed people, but they simply would not accept that they were religious. Therefore, at first they could not see any relationship between religion and active citizenship. On the other hand, there were some students who said they were religious and they would help unemployed people. There were also other questions like whether religion was important in their life and whether they would be concerned about older people. In general it turned out that religious pupils also said they were active citizens. On the other hand, other students who said that they were not religious changed their opinions and said they did not believe in the existence of a specific god but they believe in a superior being. That is why when they were asked who would say there was a supernatural power and who would help unemployed people almost every pupil in the classroom said they would. In the discussion part, the pupils changed their minds and they said religion or the belief in a supernatural power foster active citizenship. Besides, they reached the conclusion that whether the pupils have an organised system of belief in a specific religion, or whether they have an individualised belief system in a supernatural power; they accept that their belief system has a positive impact on their active citizenship.

Another hint which indicates that students have made use of critical thinking is how they interpreted the maps. Their conclusion was that a belief system in one form or another has a fostering effect on their active citizenship; however, when they had to interpret the maps from the Atlas of European Values, they could notice the inconsistencies with their conclusions. For example, Turkey has a dark colour regarding the statement 'I am a religious person' (fig. 1). However, it has a light colour regarding the statement 'I would attend in lawful boycotts' (fig. 2). Actually, the students' conclusion would predict that Turkey would also agree to 'I would attend in lawful boycotts'. Yet, it turned out to be the contrary. The

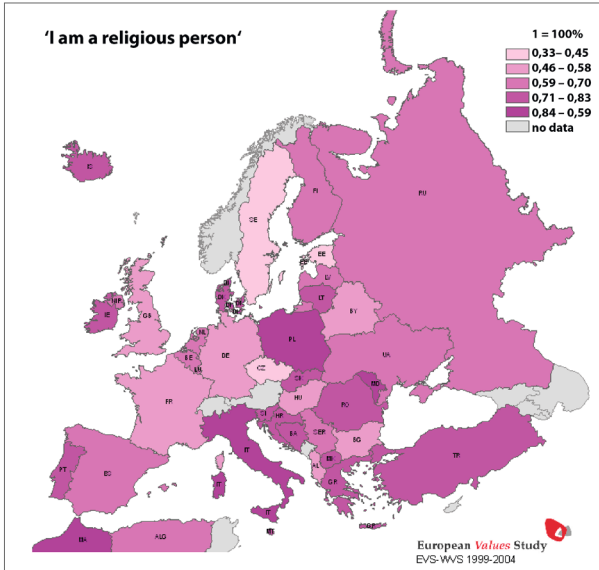


Figure 1: 'I am a religious person'

why people from different countries behave as they do.

SUGGESTIONS

After having asked all of the student teachers for their evaluation, we would like to make

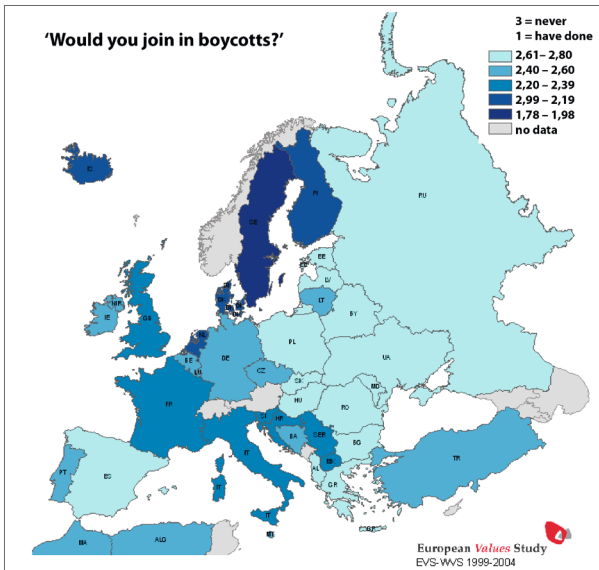


Figure 2: „I would join boycotts“

pupils could then try to explain the situation. They said it was because of how people view the government and that they are afraid of boycotts. This is actually where critical thinking plays a part. Their final conclusion then is that a lot of different things play a part in active citizenship like culture, the perception of government authority and religion. Their critical thinking skills helped them to understand that countries have unique characteristics regarding European values. Students have now gained an insight into how to consider

some suggestions.

Firstly, to enable developing critical thinking the assignments should provide more 'why' questions. Pupils of a young age aren't yet capable of asking deeper questions about the issue. If tasks require just comparing the data, it will not help the students to question them. For this reason, the assignments and the teachers have to provide some guidelines to the pupils.

Secondly, the assignments should also focus more on the preconceptions of the pupils before starting the lesson so that it will be clearer how

critical thinking was developed during the lesson. In that way it would be possible to see whether the opinion of the pupils has changed or not and whether they can explain why they think in a certain way.

Thirdly, another suggestion is that because pupils seem to benefit from group work and discussion, assignments should include tasks for both individual and group activities. Some guidelines should also be provided in the teacher notes regarding how to use which task in the most effective way.

Another suggestion is that all assignments should include pre-task, on-task and after-task activities, but the main point is that if we have to skip some tasks because of certain limitations such as time, we should not have to skip all pre-task activities, for example. The tasks should be independent enough to allow us to choose from them. If we have to skip all kinds of specific tasks, then there will be no critical thinking.

On the other hand, the content of the assignments should not be plain facts, they should enable students to negotiate and discuss and come up with their own examples. When the topic is up-to-date and somehow controversial, there will be more discussions and pupils will think more critically instead of just learning facts. Furthermore, at the beginning of all the assignments and lessons, it should be stated that there is no right or wrong, or privileged and better religion or way of believing. Because religion is a very sensitive, subjective and personal topic, some pupils may think that assignments or student teachers are biased. Such a situation will lead to a communication breakdown or maybe fights in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

As a final remark, assignments should not contain so many culture specific concepts, which are vital for students to carry out the task. For example some student teachers had difficulty in the classroom because pupils were not familiar with the concepts of 'collectivism and individualism' and they were hard to explain with just a few sentences. On the other hand, because not all the pupils are familiar with the religions and cultures of other European countries some background information about all the religions should be provided in the assignments.

Although it is one of the main components of the curriculum framework and it was tried to have it included in each assignment and lesson, critical thinking is not easy to observe. It does not necessarily take place in the classroom. So, it may not start when the lesson starts, and also it may not stop when the bell rings. Critical thinking may go on in the minds of pupils. The important point and aim of our lessons should be at least to make pupils aware of critical thinking and questioning skills and thereby to give critical thinking a go. Sooner or later, pupils will gain the necessary skills to be critical thinkers and citizens.

ASSIGNMENTS, CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION AS THE BASE OF DEVELOPING LESSONS

Kezban Altuntaş, Pinar Akçay, Suzanne Kools and Richard Schnabel

WHAT ARE THE GENERAL STRENGTHS OF THE ASSIGNMENTS?

All the assignments were tested at different schools with different grade levels. Although most of the assignments required certain adaptations regarding the age and abilities of the pupils, there were three main strengths in common. These were:

- » *the structure of the assignment*
- » *the resources of the assignment*
- » *the fostering of self-expression*

STRUCTURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The 'bottom-up' teaching pattern was observed in almost all of the assignments. They started with simple activities and the activities became more and more demanding towards the end of the assignment. To exemplify, one of the assignments started with the questions asking for the pupils' personal opinions and then for the classes' and finally for the countries'. Starting with individual values and beliefs, the students were to compare their findings to the class level and then to the country level. This helped them see how a value can differ from one person to another, one group to other and on a higher level from one country to another.

There was another common pattern in the structure in the assignments: the assignments contained tasks, which were related to the previous tasks, so that pupils could be taken

through the lesson step by step to finally be able to see the whole picture of values and religion. Work on each task led to results which were then used for the following tasks which paved the way to a final classroom discussion during which the whole process was revised.

RESOURCES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The second common strength of the assignments was the various resources provided. As the name of the project indicates, plenty of maps were used during the lessons. Some of the assignments even provided some stimulating directions on how to read and interpret maps and how to draw conclusions from them. Most of the preliminary tasks were recognising patterns and trends in the maps. The following ones were like short summaries of the maps, which led pupils to come to a conclusion.

The articles, examples and explanations supplied in the assignments helped the students to view the issues from different angles. To illustrate, one of the assignments gave one good example about tolerance and religion in Bosnia Herzegovina. The causes and the effects of conflicts were linked to each other in a model for explanation which could then be used by the students to scrutinise new kinds of conflicts.

FOSTERING SELF-EXPRESSION

The last common strength of the assignments was that the students were encouraged to think and talk about their own beliefs and share them with their classmates. While some of the pupils said that they did not talk about anything new, some of them stated that they had an interesting lesson because they talked and thought about things that they had never thought and talked about before. Moreover, pupils were asked a lot about their opinions and visions. There were numerous activities in which the pupils had to relate the information to their own lives and views. With a little adaptation (such as a card game) the pupils enjoyed the assignments a lot. Most of the assignments relied on the views of the pupils and they got involved in the subject this way.

HOW COULD YOU IMPROVE THE ASSIGNMENT?

Four main points were highlighted in the evaluation forms of student teachers regarding the question of how you could improve the assignments. These points were:

- » *the lack of specific examples*
- » *not relating the issue to the students*
- » *language problems*
- » *the infeasibility to adaptation*

LACK OF SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Some of the assignments were criticised for lacking specific examples and it was stated that there could be more specific examples from the daily lives of the students. For instance, one of the project members stated that more examples about football teams from other countries should have been given in the assignment on religion and football.

NOT RELATING THE ISSUE TO THE STUDENTS

Most of the student teachers stated that the issue dealt with in some assignments were not related to the pupils and it was hard to attract their attention. To involve the students in the assignments the student teachers had to start the lesson using games to introduce the issue into the students' lives.

Not only the issues but also the concepts in the assignments did not relate well to the students. To illustrate, concepts such as individualism and collectivism were not related to the lives of the students, hence these concepts were not meaningful to them. It took a lot of time to explain their meaning even in the native language of the students.

LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

The third point important for improving the assignments is the language level. In the evaluation forms it was stated that the English used in the assignments could and should be easier. It was suggested that shorter text or maybe a video about the history should have been provided instead of a long, complicated text, which was hard to follow for the pupils. There was another striking example about how the definitions were difficult to handle. To demonstrate, there were too many academic concepts about identity. Since the student teachers assumed that it would be hard for students to handle the concepts, they had to skip an important task, which was designed to foster critical thinking.

INFEASIBILITY TO ADAPTATION

The last common point of the assignments was that all of them contained too many task sequences, some of which were demanding. In the teacher information it was often said, that the assignments were designed to be taught in two to three lessons, but the classes we held usually only lasted fifty minutes. Thus, the assignments had to be adapted and most of the tasks had to be cut. However, some assignments included sequences of tasks, which relied on each other and that made the adaptation even more difficult.

Another problem with the adaptation was that some of the assignments focused mainly on just one country such as Germany. The students were complaining that the tasks about Germany were too detailed even though the student teachers had already managed to adapt those tasks. Since this project is about European values, the assignments should also include more information about Europe.

IN WHAT WAYS WAS THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION USEFUL? HOW COULD THIS BE IMPROVED?

The student teachers weren't quite sure about what the additional information was for. Some thought that it was extra information for the pupils; some thought that it was background information for the Turkish and Dutch student teachers and yet others thought it was the teachers' notes from their assignment.

Actually the additional information is the general background information for all the assignment tested by the teachers. So, the teachers' notes and the background information about religion together form the additional information. Just a few of the twenty student teachers did get this. It is important to make this point clear to the student teachers, but also other teachers who might want to use one of the assignments.

In general the student teachers were not very happy about the additional information. Especially the background information about religion was discussed many times. Some student teachers did not use the background information at all. In their eyes it was too hard to understand. It was too difficult to read for the Dutch student teachers because it was not written in their language. Even the Turkish students, who are studying to be English teachers, found the background information hard to understand.

If the background information could be made clearer, it would be more accessible for the student teachers and probably also for the teachers who might want to use the assignments.

Apart from the language problems, many students thought the background information was not useful because it did not offer enough information on differences and trends in the European countries. It was also very hard for the Turkish student teachers to explain what the real causes were for every similarity and difference in European values.

The teachers' notes were also thought to be insufficient by many student teachers. Firstly, some assignments seem to need some basic knowledge and many teachers' notes did not supply that extra information. For example, teachers outside the United Kingdom need special background knowledge to teach an assignment about two English football clubs, so that they do not have to waste time on researching the subject and maybe also to be able to better relate the topic to the students.

Secondly, the teacher's notes are more like an answer key in many assignments. The student teachers would prefer it to be more like a guideline than an answer key. What they were missing was some ideas on how to use the assignment in the lesson,

for example in relation to the time management. A kind of time schedule would enable the student teacher to better anticipate what he can achieve and what might be too much. Then it would also be easier to decide which tasks of the assignment should or should not be used when there is not enough time to teach the whole assignment. It would also be convenient if the teachers' notes described which parts of the assignment could be used instead of others. Therefore it would be good to know what the aims for each task were.

Also explanations of the maps that were used in the assignments were missing. Because of this, it was very hard for the student teachers to explain the maps, for example when they were expected to explain patterns. If they had more information about the maps, it would have been easier for the student teachers to use and explain the maps.

As a final conclusion about the additional information, it can be said that there should be clear teachers' notes and background information for every assignment. With this it would be easier for the student teachers to explain the topics in more depth.

WAS THE FRAMEWORK USEFUL FOR YOU AND IN WHAT WAY?

The curriculum framework used for preparing the lessons was split into four main sections. It discussed the different steps that were to be taken in the lessons that were held by the students:

- » *relating the attitudes represented in the maps of the Atlas of European Values to the pupils*
- » *describing differences (and recognizing similarities)*
- » *deepening understanding*
- » *developing critical perspectives*

The student teachers had read the curriculum framework before developing the lessons on the basis of the assignments.

When, after the lessons, the student teachers were asked for their opinions about the usefulness of the curriculum framework in terms of preparing the lessons on the basis of the assignments they had very different views about it. Most of them were rather positive.

The student teachers were pleased with the curriculum framework because it offered them a good guideline to develop the lessons and helped them to develop a more focused approach while preparing the lessons. The student teachers could try to verify whether the assignments did have the items mentioned in the curriculum framework.

On the other hand the student teachers were not pleased with the English used. This was especially true for the Dutch students, who had difficulties understanding the approach of the curriculum framework. A lot of the student teachers did not even use the curriculum framework for developing the lessons.

Another thing which was mentioned was the lack of specific examples in the curriculum framework.

IN WHAT WAYS DID THE ASSIGNMENTS REFLECT THE STEPS IDENTIFIED IN THE FRAMEWORK?

The assignments (written by lecturers of the universities of Potsdam, London, Banská Bystrica, Istanbul and Fontys Tilburg) were supposed to be based on the curriculum framework. The four main steps of the curriculum framework should then be recognisable in the assignments.

It was difficult to really write an objective conclusion about this question because a lot of student teachers did not answer or misunderstood this question. The answers we could use were rather negative about identifying the four main sections of the curriculum framework in the assignments.

A lot of the student teachers mentioned that they had difficulties in identifying all four steps of the curriculum framework in the assignments. A lot of student teachers had to then adjust the assignments that they used or they did some activities to help reach the aims of the curriculum framework. For example one group of student teachers who did the assignment entitled 'Football and Religion' wore football shirts and brought a football to the lesson to better relate the assignment to the pupils.

As a final conclusion about the curriculum framework, it cannot be said that all four steps of the curriculum framework were visible in the assignments and the student teachers were required to do some extra activities or definitions. The curriculum framework helped the student teachers as it enabled them to take a more focused approach because it offered the students guidelines to work with. The curriculum framework could be improved by using simpler English and specific examples.

CONCLUSION FOR FUTURE TEACHING

Martijn van den Beemt, Muhammed Çinkaya, Didem Tuğçe Erdem
and Robert Janssen

Religion is one of the most controversial issues in today's world and for that reason raising awareness of this issue amongst people living in different European countries is very important for future governmental policies. The European Values Education Project held in the Netherlands from 10–17 April 2010 aimed to display the similarities and differences regarding the religious values of European citizens by using the maps prepared by the AoEV (Atlas of European Values).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MAPS IN THE ATLAS OF EUROPEAN VALUES

Apart from the experience of the different educational systems, the attitudes of the pupils towards the student teachers and the subject matter affected the participants of the project.

Although most of the pupils do not have a chance to discuss the issue of 'religion' in their usual curriculum, they were very enthusiastic about the topic when the student teachers explained the terms and they really wanted to make comments using critical thinking methods. The assignments and the maps prepared by the AoEV are not normally used in classes except maybe in geography classes so this was a new experience for the pupils and they were very curious about the data coming from different countries in Europe. Their enthusiasm impressed most of us since, generally, we thought that the issue of 'religion' would not catch their attention.

The usage of the maps was one of the reasons why the pupils were very enthusiastic to participate. Normally in geography classes, colours used in the maps only show the differences between regions, countries or cities without offering much, if any, opportunities for discussion, for example, if they use the shades of colours to show differences in the population density of the countries across Europe. However, the pupils do not have a chance to discuss the reasons for these differences, or they do not have the opportunity to make comments about it. The only thing that they can do is just

describe the patterns and trends, which is not very effective in terms of fostering and encouraging critical thinking. Furthermore, the pupils may not find that these aspects relate to their own lives. Nevertheless, thanks to the AoEV maps and the assignments delivered by EVE, the pupils can have the opportunity to experience a different teaching method. The maps are used in order to show the differences or similarities of religious aspects of the different European countries without making any comments about the situation, since they only show the data which were collected from the citizens of those countries. After showing the data, the maps allow the pupils to think for themselves about the reasons for why there are differences or similarities between the European countries. In this thinking procedure, pupils can reach the higher level thinking skills by applying the methods of critical thinking. They have the chance to make a lot of comments on the reasons for the difference and they are able to express their opinions and participate in the discussions that are made throughout the lesson.

TEAM TEACHING

Seriously working with a partner on a given task and the fact that everybody had known his or her partner for approximately five months helped the student teachers to interact better with one another. After learning about the different working styles and getting used to them, sharing the responsibility becomes easier and as a result, the effectiveness while planning the lessons increases.

The student teachers came from different countries (Turkey and the Netherlands), that means, they are used to different educational systems and have different backgrounds regarding values, so one may predict that working together may turn out to be difficult. However, after working in real harmony with a common aim, which is making use of the assignments and trying to achieve good results and to get a highly positive feedback, it was obvious that coming from different curricular backgrounds and different cultures did not pose any problems. In contrast, it made the planning process stronger because different background knowledge and experiences could be combined and prejudices questioned. To be

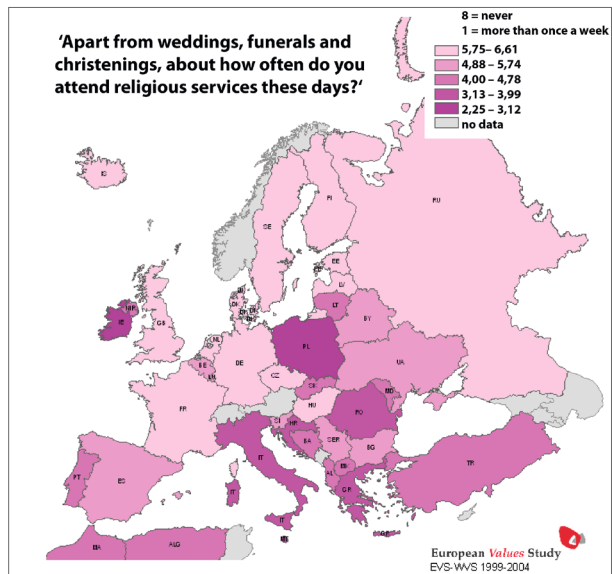


Figure 1: Attendance of religious services

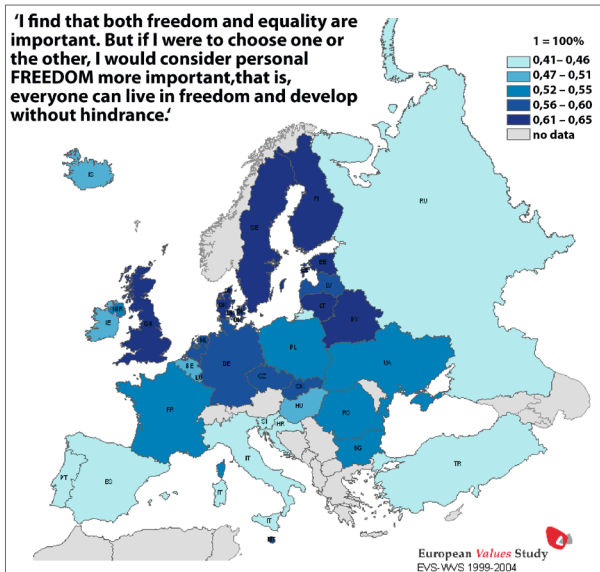


Figure 2: Freedom or equality?

in Turkey. Answering this question would have been difficult for the Dutch student teacher, but the Turkish student teachers were able to offer an explanation to show that it is not always the case in the country. Additionally, during the lesson based on the assignment entitled 'Why be religious?' (see fig. 1 and 2) the pupils asked the student teachers, why citizens from The Netherlands chose freedom instead of equality. The Dutch student teacher, by relating the answer to the pupils' lives, helped the pupils to better understand the issue because the examples given by the Dutch student teacher were well-known to them. In this way, the two people teaching improved the teaching process. These examples show that team teaching enabled the student teachers to find more adequate answers to their questions.

more specific, an example from one of the classes will help to understand the effectiveness of mixed student teacher groups. During the lesson the pupils asked for some specific information about Turkey to be able to compare the countries and to be able to find the reasons for the differences between them. For example in a lesson based on the assignment entitled 'Secularism in Europe', one of the pupils asked one of the Turkish student teachers why she wasn't wearing a headscarf. Evidently, he thought that wearing a headscarf is obligatory

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCUSSIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Nowadays, it is very important to know and understand that the belief that everyone shares the same values in Europe is not true. Pupils in secondary schools have to learn to be respectful of other people's values, and, with the help of the Atlas of European Values, we could achieve this goal. First the pupils had to share their opinions about different aspects of religion. To be able to reach this aim, many teacher teams used the traffic light game in the lessons. This game was very influential in the classes. The student teachers asked the pupils questions from the assignments. When the pupils wanted to answer the question negatively, they raised their red card. When the answer was 'yes', they raised their green card. The questions asked by the student teachers were open-ended questions, so that the pupils needed to think about the questions deeply

before choosing their cards. When each pupil raised a card, they were given a chance to compare their answers with their classmates' answers. The student teachers had to do this too because they needed to know the pupils' responses for future usage. After this part, the student teachers asked some pupils for further explanations because it is very important for the pupils, if they get in contact with people who have other values or answers. Therefore by comparing and discussing their answers, the pupils realised that even in their own class, there were a lot of different values.

ASSIGNMENTS

One of the most important issues in terms of using the assignments is how they differ from normal lessons. That is to say, the student teachers should be aware of this in order to hold a better lesson.

To start with, there are some similarities between the assignments and the normal lessons that the pupils have in their curriculum. An important example is the fact that pupils in the Netherlands, unlike in Turkey, are used to having discussions about really controversial issues. Therefore, the student teachers do not actually need to put in a lot of effort into having the pupils participate in the discussions. By being aware of this, a lot of precious time can be saved and deeper discussions can be achieved.

In the case of Muhammed & Desiree M., and Marloes and Çağlayan, the lessons took place in a religion class, so their assignments were already quite similar to what the pupils would normally have had. They were able to go deeply into the subject after a relatively short introduction phase.

On the other hand, there are also some differences between the assignments and the normal lessons. To illustrate, textbooks do not usually include discussion activities; thus, teachers need to prepare the activities themselves. In that sense, this project could be very helpful to student teachers.

The teaching of these assignments was also different from usual teaching in the sense that there was no specific course just for these assignments, so it can be said that it was something 'extra-curricular'. There was a negative side to this as well as a positive one. The positive point was that the pupils were often more enthusiastic about learning something different from their routine lessons. However, it had a negative effect on a few students in that they were not interested in topics other than their usual lessons. Here, the teacher has the responsibility to make it interesting for them in various ways such as relating the topic to the pupils.

A good example of making use of differences can be seen in that most, if not all, of the student teachers used some games in their teaching, which seems to have helped a lot, as can be seen from the pupil's evaluations. Using the traffic light game was very effective in getting the pupils' attention and encouraged the pupils to participate much more in class discussions.

Another issue to be taken into consideration while preparing the assignments was the issue of universality. To put it in other words, the topics of the assignments should not be only about one country or culture. For example, the assignment about football and religion did not have much to do with other cultures and that is why some of the pupils found it uninteresting. What is more, in one of the classes, almost none of the pupils had enough background information about the topic to be discussed and hence, the student teachers had to spend a considerable time explaining the history of football in the United Kingdom. This resulted in not having enough time for a deeper discussion. In addition, the aims of the assignment were not fully achieved due to the loss of time at the beginning of the lesson.

According to Mustafa, the assignment ‘Lucky Charms’ included too many tasks about patterns and very little about ‘lucky charms’, which can be a very interesting subject for the pupils. Other than that, the assignment ‘Unity in Diversity’ had some concepts, which were so abstract that the pupils had a very hard time to understand them. The level of the assignments was mostly too high. The level of English was too high as well. Thus, the student teachers who implemented the assignment stated that the assignments should be more practical for use in high schools; or at least different assignments should be prepared for different levels of students.

In these examples, we can clearly see that the perception of the assignment developers and the pupils are relatively different from each other. This is something that the developers of the assignments should take into consideration. For instance, they can include more concrete examples for pupils instead of concepts, which are too abstract or make the assignments more related to the pupils’ needs, interests, and age ranges. In other words, pupils’ perceptions need to be taken into consideration; otherwise the pupils may just become de-motivated with the tasks, as some of them did in the class mentioned above.

In order to overcome such problems, the student teachers came up with the idea that including them in the preparation of the assignments could be a solution. The student teachers can play the role of a bridge between the assignment developers and the pupils. Another reason for the idea is that the student teachers were not fully informed about the broad aim of the assignments, which was felt to be a very crucial deficit in preparing the lesson plans. Sometimes we could not be sure what the most important task is in the assignment, but this is important to know while preparing the lesson plans because we need to focus on what is the most important, rather than other less important issues. Also, we were usually obligated to omit some of the tasks because of time limitations in schools, which also brought up the issue of the wider aim and the most important task of the whole assignment.

IMPACT

Based on the evaluations from the student teachers, it was obvious that this project and the assignments will have effects on the student teachers' own way of teaching. Most of them are already excited about using the critical thinking component in their future lessons. The assignments and the project help not only the pupils but also us to be able to develop our critical thinking skills. One of the student teachers stated that thanks to this project, he now has a better knowledge of alternative ways of having the pupils focus on tasks by giving them freedom of speech and freedom of discussion. Also, a lot of student teachers have learned that games might make the lesson less boring.

Mark, a geography teacher in a school where the assignments were tested, explained that he could already think of a lot of explanations for the diversity in Europe when he looked at a map or when he read an article. However, thanks to the assignment, he could develop more explanations for the 'whys' and 'hows' of things, and more ideas to use in his lessons.

One of the student teachers mentioned in her evaluation that she was not planning to be a teacher although she studied in the English Language Teaching department. She said that this project made her realise how fun and important teaching was and she considered her future plans again.

Another student teacher explained the prestige of having teaching experience in a foreign country when applying for a teaching job.

COMMENTS

During the whole project, all the student teachers had a lot of practice and ideas on how to adapt the assignments in the project. They are mostly positive but they also have some ideas about how to improve and develop the assignments and the project itself as a whole. Most people expressed their ideas about time limitations. The general need that the student teachers mentioned was that they would have liked more time to prepare the lesson plans and more time to work on the evaluation and the publication as well as more time to teach the lesson. For instance, if an assignment is going to last the duration of two lessons, the student teachers should be able to ask for that length of time. If the level of the assignment is high, a class with students of a higher level should be arranged to implement the assignment.

The last comments and ideas were that there should be a network where all students from each country can share their project experiences because we all want to know what other exchange students have done, or are planning to do. In addition, some examples from previous exchanges could be handed to participants at the very first session of the project (on the first day, during the introduction part). Also, coordinators from each country can share their experiences with students, as well.

ANNEX

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The European Values Education (EVE) project is a large-scale, cross-national, and longitudinal survey research programme on basic human values. The main topic of its second stage was religion in Europe. Student teachers of several universities in Europe worked together in multicultural exchange groups. Their results are presented in this issue.

