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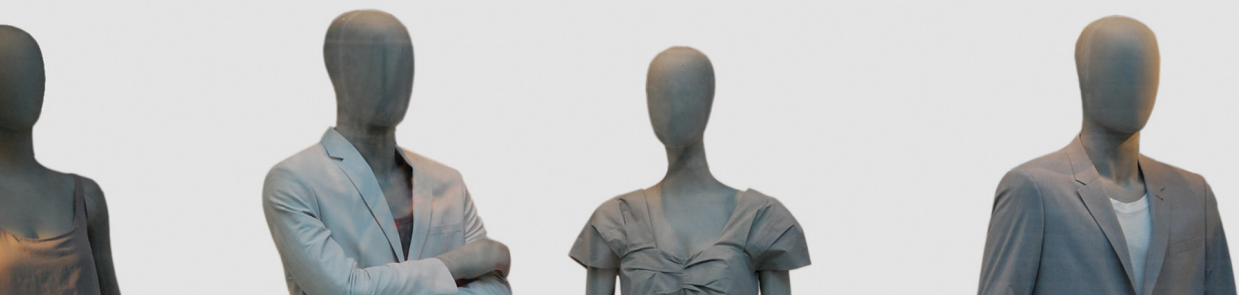# Universität Potsdam

Anke Uhlenwinkel (Ed.)

Teaching about the family values of Europeans

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

Potsdamer Geographische Praxis

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TEACHING ABOUT THE FAMILY VALUES OF EUROPEANS

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FAMILY

Josja Rokven, Inge Sieben and Loek Halman (Tilburg University)

In many European countries, a lot of fundamental changes concerning the family have been taken place in the last decades. Some speak of a new era in Europe's demographic history, and call this stage 'the second demographic transition' (Van de Kaa, 1987). The first demographic transition began with a gradual decline in death rates in the early 19th century, followed by a decline in fertility. The second transition started around 1965, and is characterized by fertility rates below replacement level (that is lower than 2.1 births per woman), accompanied with a decline in the number of marriages and a rise in the number of divorces. Also values concerning the family changed. The driving force behind these changes is thought to be modernization.

Modernization theory claims that technological developments lead to industrialization, urbanization and major changes in the labour market: occupations shifted from agricultural work to industrial and later post-industrial work, and educational credentials became much more important. In addition, levels of prosperity and wealth rose, providing people with a level of material security. This economic modernization gave way to social, political, and cultural modernization. Society became more rationalized, political systems changed into democracies, and culturally, a process of individualization started. Individualization means that there is an increase in individual freedom and self-determination, as well as an increase in the appreciation of these. Values orientated on autonomy, privacy, self-actualization and personal happiness have become more important than values that point at collective goals. Therefore, a common 'family ideal' is less a necessity for individual's happiness in the 'modern' post-materialistic countries of north-western Europe than it is for people from traditional oriented countries in the Southeast. What is of influence as well and goes along with these traditional oriented countries, is the level of religiosity within a country. Religious people are

led by traditional institutions like the church that encourage traditional family orientations. This affects a country's cultural climate, even for the non-religious in that country: in general, individuals in the more religious countries have more traditional family orientations than individuals in the less religious societies. Since the dominant role of the churches eroded in many European countries; less and less people were guided in their actions and thoughts by what the churches tell. In 'modern' society, people can no longer be dictated on how to behave and what to think is right or wrong. People want to be free and independent, and decisions are made based on personal and individual choices. Research shows that people in the economically most modernized countries indeed rank highest on individual freedom and self-determination (Hagenaars, Halman & Moors, 2003).

The focus on individual freedom and independence in 'modern' societies also means that both men and women now strive at earning a personal income. Female labour market participation increased in many European countries. While in former days it was not acceptable when mothers worked outside the household, nowadays this seems to be more accepted. This can also be explained by the welfare provisions and by the increasing facilities in many countries which make it possible for mothers to combine work and care tasks. Nonetheless, men and women are not equals yet. Earlier research shows that despite the increasing participation of women in the labour market, the participation of men in housekeeping is very little. In addition, people still object to mothers who have a full-time job since this could have negative consequences for the family, although most people approve of mothers working. Opinions about mothers' working hours seem to be strongly related to the family situation of women. In general, it seems to be mainly the post-materialistic counties in north-western Europe that have 'modern' beliefs with regard to the role of women.

Please note that the term 'modern' is not meant as a judgement (in the sense that a modern society would imply being not 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.

In this paper, we will often explain differences between European countries by looking at processes of economic modernization (more wealth) and cultural modernization (individualization and secularization: more personal freedom). Still, it is not possible to explain all differences between countries. Exceptions to the rule exist, which can be linked to the diversity of cultural heritages, languages, religious and ideological traditions and differences in political and educational systems that characterize Europe. In addition, the modernization process takes place at its own speed in each country and cultural changes do not succeed economic changes in the same way everywhere (De Graaf, 2007). Values that are connected to the family are therefore dependent on the specific national context and historical development of a country.

MARRIAGE

Although the number of marriages has decreased steadily, while the number of divorces and alternatives to the traditional form of marriage (like cohabitation) increased, one could think that marriage is no longer seen as the only form of a relationship between a man and a woman (Halman, 1996). In spite of this, most people still value marriage as being important and, therefore, marriage as an institution has not been declared dead yet (Manning, Longmore & Giordano, 2007). Contrary to what is supposed in theories of modernization and individualization, the emancipation of alternative forms of marriage did not lead to rejection of the institute of marriage. According to these perspectives, people are nowadays less bound to traditions, and they are free to act according to their personal preferences and beliefs, emphasizing personal satisfaction and self-expression. Therefore, a marriage should no longer be based on something that goes without saying; on the contrary, it has become a matter of personal choice, based on individual preferences. According to these theories, increasing individualization and self-expression leads to a decrease in traditional family orientations. But, as mentioned, this seems to be not the case when it comes to marriage: most Europeans don't think that marriage is an outdated institution (graph on p. 30 in AoEV). It is remarkable how small the differences between inhabitants of different European countries are and how positive most Europeans still are towards marriage. This seems to contradict the growing number of divorces and the growing number of people who live in cohabitation, but this doesn't have to be so. Many respondents are married themselves, and it is not very strange that they do not reject their own situation. In addition, many people see that marriage is still very common in their country and will therefore have the opinion that marriage is not an outdated institution yet. Moreover, it is possible that respondents interpret marriage as living together with one partner, as people who cohabit agree that marriage is not old fashioned. Marriage is still alive and kicking in Europe: everyone seems to want a partner for life.

In addition, many Europeans agree with the statement 'A marriage or a long-term stable relationship is necessary to be happy' (map on p. 31 of AoEV). It is particular in the south-eastern part of Europe that almost everyone thinks that a relationship is a prerequisite for happiness, whereas many people in the Northwest do not agree. We might explain these differences by looking at both economic and cultural factors. Because of increasing wealth and because many women participate in the labour market, from an economic perspective, it is no longer necessary that partners marry to bring together their incomes. In the rich north-western part of Europe, it therefore is not necessary for someone's economic happiness to be married or to have a partner. In addition to this economic modernization process, processes of individualization and secularization play a role here. People nowadays have more personal freedom and take existing rules

and norms (for example those of the church) as less for granted. They choose their own way of living and make their decisions based on personal interests and values. In the strongly individualized societies of north-western Europe, having a relationship with a partner therefore is less a prerequisite for happiness than it is in the more traditional countries in the Southeast. Apart from that, people with a partner on average seem to be happier than people without a partner (graph on p. 116 in AoEV). Before we can conclude that a relationship leads to more happiness, it is important to answer the question who has a partner and who hasn't. Maybe it is the case that people, who are happier with themselves and their lives, and who see the world from a sunny side, are more attractive for partners than unhappy losers and doom watchers, who remain single for that reason (Stutzer & Frey, 2006).

When asking people what factors are most important for a successful marriage (maps on p. 3 and further in AoEV), mainly factors that are related to the affective quality of the relationship are mentioned, like fidelity, mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance. Especially in the Northwest of Europe, these factors are often mentioned, whereas material circumstances like an adequate income and good housing are thought to be of less importance. People in the Southeast of Europe and Turkey however do think that these material circumstances are quite important factors that contribute to a successful marriage. These differences correspond with modernization theory and the related idea of Ronald Inglehart who differentiates between people with materialistic values and people with post-materialistic values (Inglehart, 1977). Inglehart bases this idea on Maslov's (1954) hierarchy of needs in which lower and higher human needs are distinguished. The hierarchy runs from a need for food and protection, via safety, affection and esteem, to self-actualization. Inglehart further assumes that, because of a huge increase in economic wealth, people take the fulfilment of lower needs for granted and start to look out for the fulfilment of higher needs. As soon as the lower needs are fulfilled, people get post materialistic needs, he proposes. Because countries in south-eastern Europe experienced less economic growth than countries in north-western Europe, people in the Southeast think material circumstances are more important for a successful marriage than people in the Northwest. The emphasis on the affective quality of the relationship on the other hand seems to indicate the importance of the individual and his or her happiness. This also means that when people experience a lack of love and care, getting a divorce is thought of as justifiable in 'modern' societies (Cherlin, 2004). Since there is much less agreement on other reasons of divorce, it can be concluded that marriage in these countries mainly serves personal happiness and security of partners.

DIVORCE

Thus, marriage is still important and highly valued (graph on p. 30 in AoEV), even in countries where there are many alternatives. At the same time, people do not oppose to divorce. Especially in the Northwest of Europe, divorce is highly accepted, while in southern and eastern Europe this is less the case, and least so in Ireland. Processes of modernization and individualization make that people who divorce are no longer stigmatized, mainly because in 'modern' societies, the meaning of marriage changed (see above). Marriage is no longer seen as a lifelong commitment and divorce is recognized as a normal ending of a marriage (Manning, Longmore & Giordano, 2007).

THE FAMILY

The popularity of the family is still present in Europe. The majority of people believe that it would be good when in the future more emphasis is put on the family (graphs on p. 27 in AoEV). This is not only the case in the South and East of Europe; also in north-western European countries, the majority of people value the family as being important. Thus, people in all European countries regard the family as the cornerstone of society. In fact, the importance of family is not that strange, since research shows that the family pre-eminently is the place to meet individual needs. Of course, this does not mean that the family is only thought of in the traditional form. The concept of 'family' is more broadly defined nowadays than it was a couple of decennia before. Therefore, when people answer questions about 'the family', they can mean different things: a large range of family types and forms of cohabitation are all denoted by the term 'family'. However, it seems to be confirmed that the idea of the 'family' represents a permanent value; not only in traditional cultures, but also in more individualized society (Halman, 1999).

CHILDREN OR CHILDLESS

The choice of staying childless is to a large extent accepted in most contemporary societies, which means that having children is now seen as an option rather than a duty. More and more people accept the choice of women to make a career for oneself even if this means that because of this career they stay childless. Not only having children has become an option, also the 'image' of children has changed. In 'traditional' society, children are seen as an economic necessity. After all, someone has to take care of the parents when they are no longer able to do it themselves. However, with growing prosperity and welfare facilities, children are no longer a necessity in 'modern' countries. The traditional idea has been

replaced by a more individualistic point of view that women decide themselves, if, how, and when they want to have children. The fact that having children is no longer necessary appears from the answers on the question whether a woman needs to have children in order to reach her destination (map on p. 29 in AoEV). In most West-European countries, only a minority agrees on this statement. In eastern and southern Europe, the majority of people, however, agree, which can be explained as being a consequence of modernization and individualization.

However, this does not mean that individualism is unlimited and one can do whatever one wants to do. The majority of people believe that a marriage or a long-term stable relationship is necessary before one decides to have children. In addition, the interest of a child (growing up happily) is more important than the interest of a woman (desire to have children) (graph on p. 28 in AoEV). This becomes also clear from the fact that a majority supports the idea that a child needs both a mother and a father in order to grow up happy (map on p. 29 of AoEV). The two-parent model is considered to be of essential importance for the normal development of children (Halman, 1999). Here we see the limit of individualism: when it comes to children, people are less inclined to adhere individualistic views and stay loyal to the traditional family pattern. Apparently, it is a generally shared view that children need both parents. Research shows that children from single parent families do less well than children from families in which both parents are present. Two parent families offer more emotional and economic security and provide better life chances than one parent families (Whitehead, 1998; Coltrane, 1998). People in the North and West of Europe however do agree less often with the statement that a child needs both a father and a mother than people in the South and East.

So, children still have an important position in 'modern' societies. The number of people that do not wish to have children is, in fact, very small. Although children are no longer considered as necessary for the success of an individual; for the success of a relationship they seem rather important, at least in Western-Europe. In more 'traditional' Eastern-Europe, having children is more or less a social norm. Noticeable is that the well-being of children is more important than the well-being of oneself. Many people find the traditional family with both a father and a mother essential for the happiness of the child.

PARENTING-VALUES

Not only parenthood became an option, also the role that parents play with regard to the socialization process of children has changed: from teacher to companion. The family became a democratic institute in which the relationship between parents and children is characterized by equality. Thus, the role of parents changed: the upbringing of a child became less a process of disciplinary supervision and

more a matter of personal attention for the emotional and relational aspects in the development of a child. Consequently, the things that parents teach their children have changed too. Instead of putting emphasis on qualities like obedience and discipline (maps on p. 38 in AoEV), people in 'modern' societies value responsibility and independency (maps on p. 40–41 in AoEV) as more important to teach children, because these are the values that support individual freedom and self-actualization.

LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

In general, mothers work fewer hours than fathers, especially when the children in the household are young. Often mothers have to choose between quitting work or working full-time and using formal or informal childcare providers. In Spain, women work either not or they work full-time; part-time work is quite rare. In the United Kingdom it appears that women do not work less when having children. Also, in Sweden where there are good facilities to combine work and care, this is not exceptional. However, In the Netherlands, working part-time is, for quite some time now, considered as the ideal way to combine work and care. In the United Kingdom and Germany, a majority of part-timers work less than 20 hours outside the household, whereas in France, Spain and especially Sweden only a minority of women work less than 20 hours. In general, research shows that having children results in women working less hours on the labour market.

Of course, these patterns are related to the opinions of people about working mothers. Working outside the household is more and more accepted in 'modern' societies and, therefore, there is less objection to combining work and care. However, people do object more if women work full-time because they believe this has negative consequences for the family, although the majority of people still approve of mothers working. As we saw before, many men and women prefer that a child is raised by both the father and the mother and, therefore, to keep the upbringing in the hands of the family, especially when children are small. In addition, if children go to school, parents prefer that one of both parents is at home when the children come home from school. However, a change can be observed: younger generations appear to have less difficulty when mothers of young children or pre-school children work. What becomes clear is that opinions about working hours are strongly related to the family situation of women. Especially people in the northern Scandinavian, countries appear to have 'modern' values with regard to the role of the mother. In addition, they believe that mothers who work as well as mothers who do not work can have a warm bond with the children (map on p. 37 in AoEV); a pre-school child is not likely to suffer if his or her mother works; being a housewife is not what women really want; both the husband and wife should contribute to the household income (map on p. 37 in AoEV); fathers

are as well suited to look after their children as mothers; etc. The majority of people in the Mediterranean countries believe the opposite. Countries like the Netherlands, Iceland, and England rank in the middle. Here, individuals believe that men and women should be equal in the household, although on the labour market they appear to be less equalitarian (equal). The Czech Republic – along with Slovenia and Slovakia – score quit high concerning equality on the labour market. The more 'modern' ideas on working women in these countries can be explained by the communist decades in which political, sexual and economic equality of women was explicitly proclaimed as a major political goal. In other parts of Eastern-Europe (Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania) people, however, seem to be most traditional, even though they accept a moderate equality at the labour market. Apparently, other cultural and historical factors play a role here, one of them being the larger influence of the church which propagates more 'traditional' family values.

CONCLUSION

Economic modernization processes (more wealth) seem to be accompanied with cultural modernization processes (individualization and secularization: more personal freedom). In the more 'modern' countries in Europe, values about family life are more liberal than in the more 'traditional' countries. This is especially the case for ideas about marriage and happiness, what makes a marriage successful, justification of divorce, parenting values, and opinions about working women. Nevertheless, people in all European countries think that marriage is not an outdated institution and value the family as very important. It, however, is quite plausible that the meaning of marriage and family changed in more 'modern' countries. Since not all country differences can be explained by modernization theory, it is important to look at country-specific circumstances.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF USING APPROPRIATE CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

Anke Uhlenwinkel

Considering the experiences of the teacher trainers and the evaluations written by the student teachers we have gone quite some way during the first two phases of the EVE-project. This is reflected in the changes we made to the curriculum framework, which has now even been renamed 'principles' (see Brooks; chapter I). Notwithstanding the new terminology, the document still contains the four stages of learning which had also been part of the curriculum framework.

> **Deepening Understanding**
> Disciplinary concepts and theories deepen our understanding of why differences (and similarities) in attitudes exist. However they do not have all the answers and some theories are inadequate. Pupils should use these concepts to question the data in the maps. They are then in a position to verify and reformulate these theories.

Box 1: Description of Deepening Understanding

The third of these stages is called 'deepening understanding' (see box 1). In our first curriculum framework this stage was still called 'investigating explanations', but we soon felt that very often we and the student teachers were discussing different points of view rather than explaining data. Therefore, we felt we should focus on explanations *and* arguments. This led to a rebranding of this stage, so that it is now called 'deepening understanding'. With this change it became a lot easier for the authors of the assignments and for the student teachers to handle the curriculum framework as the introduction of arguments opened up the scope

for different possible answers, whereas explanation was understood by some as the one and only conceivable solution.

Nevertheless, the task of deepening pupils' understanding of the data is far from simple. It is true that we were given some theoretical background knowledge by the researchers from the European Values Study (EVS), who collected the data, but this was mainly based in modernisation theory and although this may be a suitable approach for the scientific purposes of the EVS, it turned out to be too inflexible for use in the classroom. So, to be able to deepen understanding we as authors and the student teachers as practitioners started to focus on just one or two countries we felt familiar with. For the authors this was usually our own country and one or two other countries we had studied in greater depth. The student teachers often compared the host country to the country of their exchange partner. Both ways we were losing the focus on European values. Also while trying to focus on the theoretical approaches of the social scientists we somehow lost sight of the subject, in which these assignments were supposed to be used. Thus not surprisingly the student teachers in their evaluation remarked that 'it is very hard to develop lessons from an assignment that is not based on geographical concepts'.

To alleviate this problem we decided to refocus on the subject. We suggested shifting the attention from the data and the topics they cover to the subject content, e.g. to a geographical question that can be discussed with all the data on all the topics. A suggestion for such a 'big question' was: 'What kind of a place is Europe and what kind of a place would you like it to be?' which is now the overarching question in the new principles. This question is underpinned by a conception of Europe as a place that is made, maintained and contested thereby forming a unique site of history and identity (Cresswell, 2004). Combining this description of the concept of place with the organising concepts of geography (Taylor, 2008) we get a wide variety of possible approaches that can all be seen as suitable for geography lessons (see figure 1).
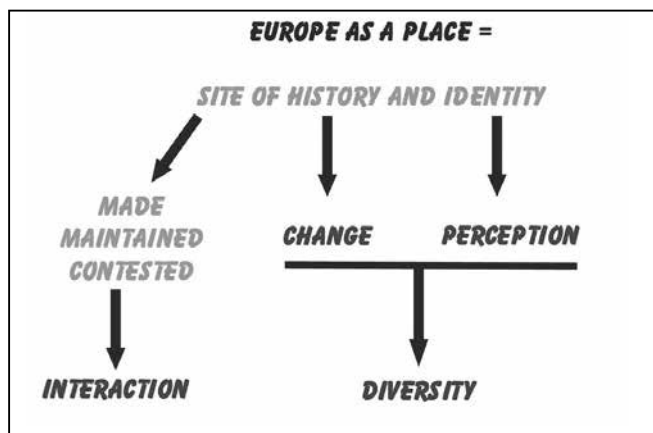
Figure 1: Europe as a place

Another problem arose when the student teachers were asked to use the background information offered by the Tilburg scientists to develop their lesson plans on family. This time the problem of using modernisation theory as an explanation was shifted from the teacher trainers to the student teachers and some of their reactions were extremely critical, but well-founded. Especially the Turkish student teachers felt that the strong relation envisaged between family values and religion could not hold true for their country.

It is interesting to note that this critique has been addressed in another section of the Value Studies, the World Values Survey (WVS). The research in this strand of the values studies agrees that there are two different dimensions of modernisation. The first dimension denotes the change from traditional to secular-rational values, the second the change from survival to self-expression values. The first dimension is seen as the classical modernisation process, while the second dimension denotes post-modernisation. Both dimensions are described by a set of ten items respectively (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Unfortunately, the items do not contain any family values. Nevertheless, there are two lists of items that strongly correlate with either the first or the second dimension (see box 2). And these lists do contain a number of items that are related to what people think about families:

'FAMILY' CORRELATES OF TRADITIONAL VERSUS SECULAR-RATIONAL VALUES

Traditional values emphasize the following:

» *One of respondent's main goals has been to make his or her parents proud (0.81)*
» *Parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being (0.57)*
» *Divorce is never justifiable (0.56)*
» *If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems (0.49)*
» *One must always love and respect one's parents regardless of their behaviour (0.45)*
» *Family is very important in respondent's life (0.43)*
» *Respondent favours having a relatively large number of children (0.40)*

> ### 'FAMILY' CORRELATES OF SURVIVAL
> ### VERSUS SELF-EXPRESSION VALUES
>
> Survival values emphasis the following:
>
> » *A woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled (0.83)*
> » *A child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily (0.73)*
> » *One must always love and respect one's parents regardless of their behaviour (0.71)*
> » *When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women (0.69)*
> » *A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl (0.67)*
> » *Hard work is one of the most important things to teach a child (0.64)*
> » *Imagination is not one of the most important things to teach a child (0.62)*
> » *Tolerance and respect for others are not the most important things to teach a child (0.62)*

Box 2: The importance of family values in modernisation and post-modernisation (source: Inglehart, Welzel, 2005, p. 53–56)

These lists suggest that values relating to families are more important for the shift from survival to self-expression values than for the shift from traditional to secular-rational values, since almost all values in the list for the first dimension (modernisation) correlate less strongly than all values in the list for the second dimension (post-modernisation). The only exception to this is the first value in the list for the first dimension (modernisation), 'one of respondent's main goals has been to make his or her parents proud', which correlates strongly to traditional values. The one item that is found in both lists, 'one must always love and respect one's parents regardless of their behaviour' mirrors these findings as it has a correlation of 0.71 to the second dimension (post-modernisation), but of only 0.45 to the first dimension (modernisation). The overall outcome of this is that family values do not change so much with secularisation, but with individualisation.

These findings support the Turkish students' view that the relation between religion and family values is weaker than the Tilburg scientists suggest. In this respect it was extremely positive to have an exchange partner with a non-Christian background. The discussion of this issue did not only deepen the cultural understanding of the student teachers of both countries involved but it also showed the power of theories over people's thinking. The Turkish students' view definitely enriched the European perspective to an extent that the European theoretical approach did not provide for, but that was included in the more globally oriented theoretical understanding of the World Values Studies.

Both these incidences show how theory can play a crucial role in teaching and in better understanding the world. If the theoretical background does not fit either the subject or the everyday experience of the people involved it will only serve

to create uneasiness and frustration in lesson planning and in teaching. In the long run, this may lead to a reluctance of the student teachers to use theory at all – even though, strictly speaking, the usage of theory cannot be avoided as we use it all the time, even if it is inadequate. To address this issue teacher trainers have to be well aware of the power of theory and the pitfalls of employing it thoughtlessly.

THE EVE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK – THE THIRD INSTALMENT

Clare Brooks

This is the third chapter in the continuing 'story' of the curriculum framework for the EVE-project. In the previous two versions I have outlined the purposes of the curriculum framework and how it related to the overall aims of the EVE-project. The original curriculum framework was amended in the light of the evaluations received from the first exchanges, and yet the project team were still unhappy with the second version and the overall 'outputs' of the project.

THE NEW APPROACH

The third phase marks a significant change in the development of the project. The evaluations highlighted the different expectations of the student teachers in different countries and the difficulties with working with diverse groups of children. The main teaching resource: that of 'assignments to be trialled' was hugely flawed, as there were many factors which affected whether they were successful. In response to these problems the project team changed approach.

In this third phase of the project assignments would now be developed by the student teachers rather than the EVE team. To support them in collating coherent learning experiences, the EVE team compiled a series of teaching strategies – many of the chapters in this book will outline and evaluate the success of these strategies. The idea was that student teachers, working in cross-cultural pairs, would select a range of strategies, appropriate maps from the Atlas of European Values and together develop a lesson plan.

This new approach changed the value and purpose of the EVE curriculum framework. The project team felt that now the student teachers needed a document that would support them in putting together their own lesson plan. This would involve guidance on deciding on the aim and objective of the lesson, selecting appropriate maps, and finding which activities or strategies would best help them to achieve those objectives.

CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The change in approach required a change in the curriculum framework. The curriculum framework now had to set out:

> » *The learning intentions of lessons associated with the EVE-project.*
> » *The key questions that should guide that learning.*
> » *How those key questions could be broken down into questions that reflect the lesson aims.*
> » *How those lesson aims will influence the selection of maps and strategies – i.e., how the lesson planning should be undertaken.*

There are three key dimensions that influenced the changing of the curriculum framework: the first was on the changed focus of the document and how it was to be used; the second was on terminology and generating a shared understanding of that terminology with the project participants; and the third was on process, and supporting the student teachers in the process of lesson planning.

The name of the document changed. Reflecting the different purpose and use, the project team agreed that to refer to the document as 'Principles underpinning the WW' would be clearer as to how the document should be used.

Key terminology was highlighted: the overall aims of the project were referred to as **overarching questions**. To break these down into the relevant themes required **thematic questions**. Individual lessons should reflect these thematic questions but rely on a **lesson focus** to guide the appropriate selection of resources and pedagogy for the lesson plan.

The principles were expanded to include information that we felt was important for teachers developing their own plans and ideas. The principles now included a statement of what we understood by Europe, and how the project sought to achieve a greater understanding of Europe. This was expressed in discipline-relevant questions. The four stages of the approach to learning promoted in the project were kept from the previous versions as they reflected the learning that we wanted students to achieve, but were supplemented by a breakdown of the step-by-step process of how to plan an EVE lesson.

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE EVE-PROJECT

The maps in the Atlas of European Values are generated from the European Values Survey, and represent peoples' responses to questions about their attitudes. They show the <u>average</u> response for each European country. The maps offer a valuable resource for teachers who wish to explore what it means to be European. In this project Europe is viewed as a spatial entity that is produced and reproduced through the daily actions of its inhabitants. In this sense, 'Europe' is constantly produced and reproduced by Europeans. This definition does not restrict Europe to geographical or political phenomena but sees it also as a social and cultural project in space. Lessons from the EVE-project are guided by two **overarching questions** that emphasise this European dimension:

What kind of a place is Europe, and what kind of a place would you like it to be?

What kind of a society is Europe, and what kind of society would you like it to be?

To answer these questions, the EVE-project offers a number of strategies that can be used with the maps. These principles are offered to help teachers decide how to use the strategies and the maps in their lessons. The strategies represent a particular approach to learning: one that encourages discussion and debate between pupils. Such an approach is integral to learning about complex issues. We recommend that there are four stages to this approach to learning:

a) *Relating the attitudes represented in the maps of the AoEV to their own.*

Pupils should situate themselves in the discussion about different attitudes and to be able to empathise with a range of other perspectives.

b) *Describing differences (and recognising similarities).*

The maps represent average figures for each country, and such generalisations may hide (or reveal) complex differences. The strategies encourage pupils to question the data in the maps by appreciating that there are a range of viewpoints even within their own class.

c) Deepening Understanding.

Disciplinary concepts and theories deepen our understanding of why differences (and similarities) in attitudes exist. However they do not have all the answers and some theories are inadequate. Pupils should use these concepts to question the data in the maps. They are then in a position to verify and reformulate these theories.

d) Developing critical perspectives.

An individual's attitudes reflect a complex web of values and beliefs which can be difficult to unpack. Therefore to interrogate the messages within the data pupils need to appreciate the subjectivity and assumptions of the data.

THE PROJECT APPROACH RECOMMENDS THESE STEPS:

1. *The maps in the AoEVs are organised in a series of themes. The EVE-project focusses on four themes: work, society, family, religion. To develop a lesson in the EVE-project, the theme should relate to the subject being taught. For example, in the theme of Family, a geography lesson could focus on how changes to women's working practices have changed family life. A sociology lesson however might focus on how culture influences changing family life. This could be formulated as a thematic question such as Is Europe a place where family life is changing?*

2. *The lesson focus could also be in the form of a question. This lesson focus should be something that can be answered in one lesson, and will go some way towards answering the thematic question for example with the above thematic question, a geography lesson focus could be: Is Europe a place where people have less children? Or: Is Europe a place where people agree on the roles of men and women? A sociology lesson might ask: Is Europe a society where parents have a lot of influence on the values of children? Or: Is Europe a society where the number of children in a family is influenced by social inequality? The lesson focus should be geared towards your pupils and should interest them. It should also enable the pupils to develop an answer to the thematic question.*

3. *Select the strategies and maps. Ideally your lesson should enable students to achieve all of the four stages described above but not necessarily in that order. Shorter lessons may only feature two or three of the stages. The maps used in your lesson should be both relevant and appropriate. In order to check if a map is appropriate you should work through your lesson and evaluate what learning the pupils will achieve. For example to answer the question Is Europe a place where people agree on the roles of men and women, the map 'In general, fathers are as well suited to look after their children as mothers' (http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/ map.php?id=216&lang=en) is relevant, and might be appropriate.*

4. *Evaluate what pupils have learnt from the lesson. Did the lesson focus enable the pupils to develop an understanding of the thematic question?*

The aim is that through an EVE inspired lesson, pupils will develop a critical **understanding** of an individual's responsibilities in a diverse society and society's responsibility to the individual, and will develop a growing sense of what it means to be part of Europe's future.

Needless to say, the project team were still not convinced that this was the final version of the Curriculum Framework. We waited with anticipation to see how student teachers would react to the latest version.

II. CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION IN TURKEY

GENDER, STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, AND REGIONAL DISCREPANCIES

Havva Ayşe Caner, Fatma Nevra Seggie

INTRODUCTION

Although Turkey is among the twenty largest economies in the world (OECD, 2010), its level of economic development is not reflected in all spheres of society. According to the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index for 2010, out of 169 countries Turkey ranked 84th overall, but in education specifically it ranked 109th (UNDP, 2010). Although various projects for improving the educational system have been attempted, especially after Turkey became a candidate for joining the European Union, the challenges persist. Among them, student achievement, gender inequality, and regional discrepancies are the most prominent. Although each of these challenges is treated separately in what follows, they are, in fact, closely related in cause and effect.

GENDER DISCREPANCIES IN EDUCATION

Even though the enrolment rates for female students and the length of time they spend in schools have substantially increased over the years, gender inequality still exists (see graph 1) and remains beneath international standards (Duman, 2010).

There are several reasons for the gender gap. At the primary level, the parents' lack of education is a prevailing factor that impedes the participation of girls.

Research shows that one more year of either parents' education has a positive impact on girls' schooling (Bakış, Levent, İnsel & Polat, 2009).
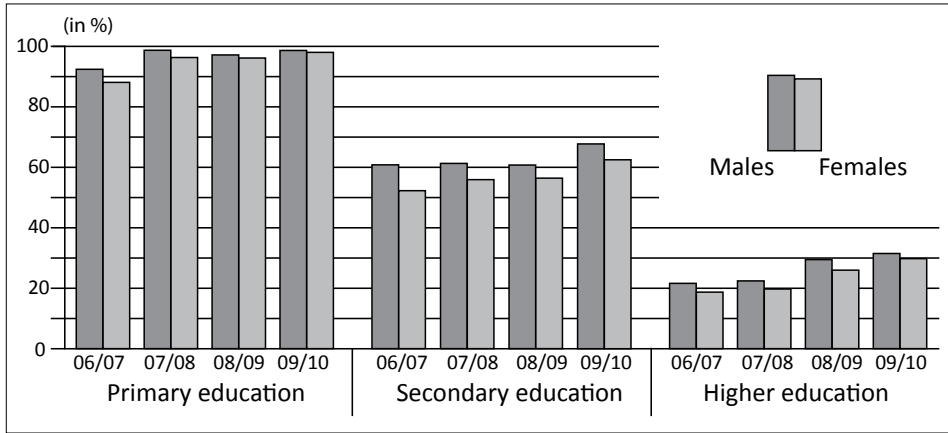
Graph 1: The schooling ratio of Turkish students according to the level of education (source: MoNE, 2011)

Another reason is the occurrence of single parent families in which the girls are kept at home to help with the housework and to look after siblings (Bakış, Levent, İnsel & Polat, 2009; Candaş, Yılmaz, Günseli & Çakar, 2010; Duman, 2010; ERG, 2009). Regionally, girls are less likely to go to school in areas where agriculture is the only source of income for the family and the distance to school discourages attendance.
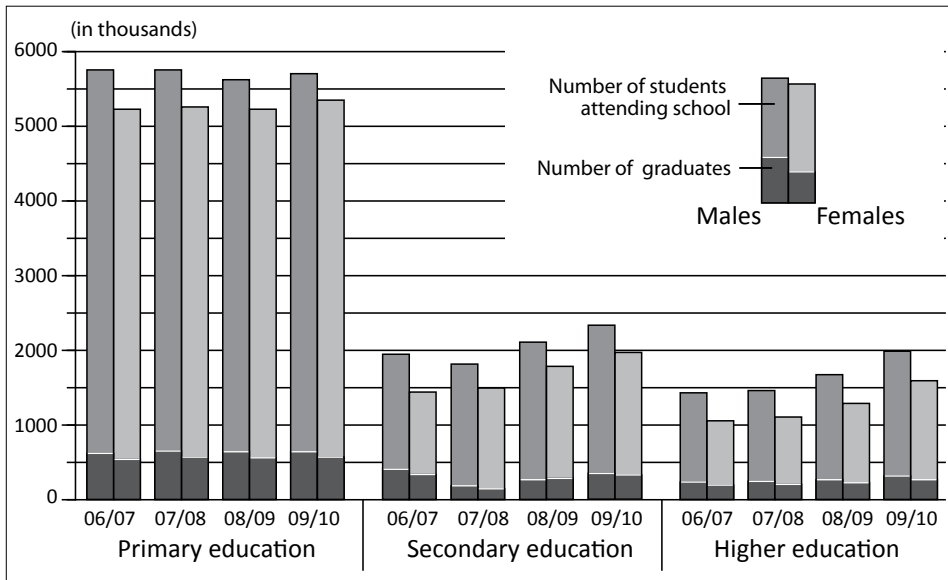
Graph 2: The number of students attending school and the number of graduates (source: MoNE, 2011)

In Southeastern Anatolia, conservative values and belief systems are likely to foster the problem (ERG, 2009). At the secondary level, the preference in families of low economic status is usually to give boys rather than girls the opportunity to go to school. As at the primary level, single parenthood (especially single motherhood) and an agricultural economy both have a negative impact on girls' schooling. The father's level of education is also influential (Bakış, Levent, İnsel & Polat, 2009; Candaş, Yılmaz, Günseli & Çakar, 2010; ERG, 2009). At the level of higher education, female enrolment is limited for a variety of reasons: the lack of job opportunities, the cost of a university education, and the argument that a degree does not contribute much to the lives of women who are better off if they get married. Furthermore, at all three levels, female students have a lower rate of graduation than male students (see graph 2).

ACADEMIC DISCREPANCIES IN EDUCATION

Low levels of student achievement are a persistent challenge. Results of international assessments such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that in reading and mathematical and scientific literacy, students in Turkey are way behind their peers in other member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). For instance, Turkey was ranked 29th among 30 OECD countries in 2006 and 32nd among 34 OECD countries in 2009. Studies analysing the determinants of these test results report that student achievement in Turkey is most affected by socioeconomic background. Using data from the 2006 PISA surveys, Dinçer and Uysal (2010) found that the greatest determinant of student achievement is the type of school that students attend, which in turn is associated with family income. For instance, students in Anatolian High Schools, which accept students according to highly competitive nationwide examinations that favour the children from well-to-do families, get higher scores than students in general high schools (40 points higher) and vocational high schools (70 points higher). In the same study, Dinçer and Uysal (2010) found that student achievement is substantially affected by parental employment and the father's education. Moreover, the average socioeconomic status of students in a given school has a positive impact on their achievement. Their findings suggest that 'students coming from similar socioeconomic background enrol in similar schools, which might imply peer effects or better learning environments. In either case, it seems that the education system is reproducing the disadvantages stemming from socioeconomic background rather than erasing them' (p. 598).

In a study of the 2009 PISA results, Blanchy and Şaşmaz (2011) reported similar findings. Using the Economic, Social, and Cultural Status (ESCS) index, in which the socioeconomic condition of each student is taken into account, they compared the test scores of students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds with those

of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. They found an achievement gap between these two groups in OECD countries, but the gap in Turkey was significantly wider than the average. In line with Dinçer and Uysal (2010), the results of Blanchy and Şaşmaz (2011) confirm that students' socioeconomic background has a major effect on academic achievement in Turkey. They stated, 'When the relationship between socioeconomic background and academic achievement in Turkey is compared to other countries, the correlation is much higher and is bolstered by the fact that schools are divided according to socioeconomic background' (Blanchy & Şaşmaz, 2011, p. 133). Just as socioeconomic development differs regionally in Turkey, so student achievement on international assessments differs from one region to another. Erberber's (2009) analysis of the results from the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) clearly shows that science achievement differs regionally (cited in McClure, 2011). That these results are consistent with earlier studies underscores the persistence of the problems (Yayan & Berberoğlu, 2004; Alpay et al., 2007, cited in Dinçer & Uysal, 2010).

REGIONAL DISCREPANCIES IN EDUCATION

There are seven regions in Turkey. The four western regions, Marmara, Aegean, Central Anatolia, and Mediterranean, are more socioeconomically developed than the three more rural eastern regions, Black Sea, Eastern Anatolia, and Southeastern Anatolia. Istanbul, the industrial hub of the country, is in Marmara; Ankara, the capital city, is in Central Anatolia. These two regions are more urbanized with higher populations (Erberber, 2009, cited in McClure, 2011).

As in every other way, the regions differ markedly in the context of education. The number of students enrolled in primary education is greater in western regions than in eastern regions. Access to education and the quality of education are also more positive in western regions (McClure, 2011). Girls, particularly, are more disadvantaged in eastern regions in terms of access to schools and levels of achievement than are girls in western regions. At the primary level in the Marmara, Aegean, Central Anatolia, Mediterranean, and Black Sea regions, the percentage of females enrolled in schools was around 48 %, whereas it was around 44 % in Southeastern Anatolia and 42 % in Eastern Anatolia (Coker, 2002, cited in McClure, 2011). In addition, attrition rates in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia for both boys and girls are problematically high; 'By the time fifth grade students reached eighth grade close to half of the female students and one fifth of the male students had dropped out from the schooling system' (Coker, 2002, p. 141, cited in McClure, 2011). In terms of student achievement, again there are big differences among regions. Erberber's study (2009) indicated that the regions with the highest TIMSS scores were Marmara, Aegean, and Central Anatolia, and

the lowest scores were in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia (Erberber, 2009, cited in McClure, 2011).

A study conducted by Olgun, Gümüş, and Adanacıoğlu in 2009 revealed that 39.25 per cent of the rural villages they visited did not have a primary school. Students in these areas had to travel an average of eleven kilometres to go to school. Moreover, heavy weather conditions and lack of good roads compounded the problem, making it very difficult for students to continue their education (Olgun, Gümüş & Adanacıoğlu, 2009, cited in McClure, 2011). The same study also indicated that in several rural areas which did have schools, there were other severe problems, including a lack of teachers, overcrowded classrooms, few resources, different classes in the same classroom, and too many missed lessons hours (Olgun, Gümüş & Adanacıoğlu, 2009, cited in McClure, 2011).

CONCLUSION

In this section, the challenges of the Turkish educational system in terms of gender, student achievement, and regional discrepancies have been examined. It is clear that the system is far from providing equal educational access and opportunities for all students; rather it perpetuates existing inequalities. Given that 'Turkey is the country with the second most unequal income distribution, right after Mexico, among all OECD countries' (Buğra, Bilgen, Çakar, Yılmaz, The Bosphorus University Social Policy Forum Report, 2010, cited in Bianet News in English, 29/7/2010) education is one of the most critical means of alleviating the problem. Thus, the development and implementation of more effective educational policies must be given the highest priority.

RELATING TO STUDENTS

Daniela Baars, Adem Dal, Esra Şimşek

WHAT DOES RELATING TO STUDENTS MEAN?

Every teacher who has taught before would support the following proposition: motivated students learn better. In order to motivate students, it is necessary for teachers to have an understanding of their pupils' background. Several strands of research demonstrate that developing a personal interest in pupils is not only effective for encouraging participation and engagement, but necessary for success in learning, as there is a strong link between emotion and cognition, according to some researchers (Zull, 2002). That means if strong and positive emotions which are engendered by care, motivation and interest are not present, real learning seldom occurs. Accordingly, negative emotions, such as fear and shame, can obstruct the learning process. Classic research in communication studies also highlights the positive benefits of supportive environments (that is, those characterized by description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality) versus defensive environments (that is, those focused on evaluation, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority, certainty) (Gibb, 1961). Interestingly, undergraduate students repeatedly mention one-to-one interactions with instructors in supervised projects and closer interactions with other students and instructors in small classes as important factors for their learning. Developing personal interest in pupils is the first step towards demonstrating that a community exists within the classroom (Palmer, 1998; Tompkins, 1996).

In our project a variety of strategies were used to convey to the pupils that their instructors take a personal interest in them and their learning. For detailed information on these strategies see the appendix.

The following part will take a closer look at the effectiveness of these strategies in the context of how they helped pupils to relate to the topic.

STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF RELATING THE TOPIC TO THE PUPILS

Most of the student teachers claimed that 'relating the topic to pupils' helped them to better achieve other aims of the lessons especially describing similarities and differences and critical thinking. Therefore, they applied some activities *at the beginning* to reach this (immediate) aim. Almost all of them suggested that these activities functioned as a motivating and engaging tool which contributed positively to the classroom atmosphere. As a result, according to the questionnaire, many student teachers not only tried to relate to the pupils, but also related to the topic simultaneously with activities aiming at 'relating to pupils'.

Therefore, these activities were summarised in two categories: Firstly, relating the topic to pupils, and secondly relating to the topic (see table 1). However, a few of them were only plain question-answer exchanges instead of a specific approach. These questions were about the pupils' concerns, aims and experiences which they have had so far. Two pairs also asked for guesses about the foreign student teachers' family relations.

Strategies used	Relating to pupils	Relating to topic
Chessboard	Helping pupils to formulate ideas	————
Snowball	————	Introducing the topic
Brainstorming	Helping to discover pupils' attitudes	Helping to discover pupils' background knowledge
Picture frame		
What would happen if		
Intelligent guess work		
The time machine		

Table 1: Strategies used to relate to pupils and topics

As mentioned above, most of the pupils were already prepared for the lesson thanks to the activities carried out to cover the aim of relating to pupils.

It should be noted that two student teachers, covering the value of love and respect, explained that the topic itself was already related to pupils' daily life. Therefore, they did not need to use any further activities apart from introducing the topic. Moreover, surprisingly, one couple claimed that their main strategy '*what would happen if …*', functioned to relate the topic to pupils.

CONCEPTIONS OF THE PUPILS

To start with, it may be necessary to explain what we mean by *conceptions*. The Oxford University Dictionary defines conception as '*the way in which something is perceived or regarded*'. In the light of this definition, conception will be referred to as an abstract idea consisting of concepts throughout the paper.

In our interviews, we asked the student teachers if they had any expectations in advance to find specific conceptions, to which the answers were rather diverse. As mentioned above, one couple used the *snowball strategy* only to introduce the topic since they were not sure about what to expect at all.

To understand what kind of conceptions the pupils worked with, graph 1 should be analysed. However, it should be noticed that the categories were summarised and therefore do not include all of the conceptions mentioned. The following sub-categories could be found:

A) Modernisation:

» *Modernisation*
» *Individualisation*
» *Globalisation*

B) Tradition, Religion and Culture:

» *Tradition*
» *Religion*
» *Culture and cultural differences*
» *History*

C) Economic Conditions:

» *Money*
» *Career*
» *Education*

It should be noted that modernisation does not necessarily mean globalisation and individualisation even though one could consider them to be related. Both terms may also support other categories. Moreover, it is very crucial to add that the pupils may have uttered these conceptions without being aware of the exact meaning since some students could not explain what they meant when they were asked for further explanation or clarification. It was assumedly because of their lack of proficiency in English. Therefore, these conceptions may be taken into consideration in terms of their associations instead of their literal meanings.
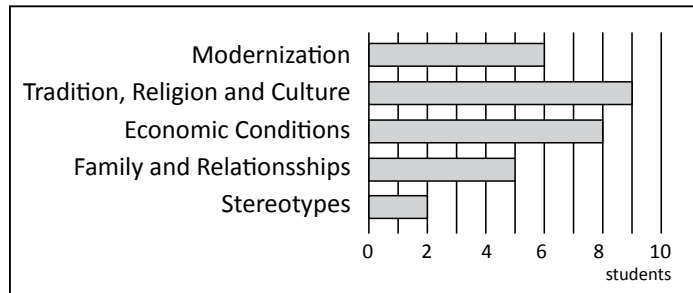
Graph 1: Conceptions mentioned by pupils

Further conceptions which were mentioned were feminism, travelling/holidays, tolerance and respect as a critical value, open-mindedness, peace, love, unity, human rights, equality and success. They are not included in the table since most of them were uttered only once.

Moreover, some pupils used some clear-cut stereotypical ideas especially in terms of modernisation and individualisation.

PUPILS' PERSPECTIVE

Regarding the issue of *relating to pupils,* we mostly looked at the issue from the student teachers' perspective so far. Their expectations, their opinions about the efficiency of strategies, the overall effectiveness, and the appropriateness of strategies have been covered. However, it is necessary to take the pupils' evaluations into consideration as well in order to get a better understanding (bigger picture). To do so, at the end of each lesson, the student teachers collected data regarding the pupils' ideas about how the lesson went. Having considered the ideas, we tried to come up with an analysis. It made it possible to compare the student teachers' perceptions of their efficiency in relating the topic to pupils with how the pupils have seen it.

Except for two groups who could not finish the main activity in time due to management problems and on-going lively discussions, all of the student teachers collected some data to work with. They used two methods basically:

1. *They asked three or four questions at the end of the lesson and wanted the pupils to give answers to those questions.*

2. *They used a 'smiley' line. To do that, two smileys were drawn on the board: one with a happy face for the pupils who liked the lesson and one with an unhappy face for the ones who did not like the lesson/activity.*

According to the student teachers, it was easy and simple to apply the second method. On the other hand, the first written evaluation enabled student teachers to get more specific material to work on for future benefits. Furthermore, it helped to encourage pupils who might feel uneasy about making an evaluation in front of the class. Some pupils formulated very useful ideas at the end. Almost all groups had their lessons in a row. Therefore, they did not have time to revise their lesson plans and apply any ideas springing from the feedback accordingly.

The answers given to the question 'What did you learn?' were conclusive because they gave us some ideas about the *relevancy of the topic*. The following response taken from Christian Strehmel's and Adem Dal's class can be seen as an example:

> *'This activity taught me (that) every country has a different idea about relationships. We have learnt a lot about the role of relationships in our lives, and we saw that the understanding of having a boyfriend or girlfriend changes in every country. I have learnt that relationships have connections with education, traditions and culture. And for some countries relationships are not very important.'*

Obviously, they found the topic 'long-term relationships' in terms of happiness very important in their lives. However, the pupils did not like to state their opinions about some sensitive topics such as tolerance towards others or discrimination.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE PUPILS

The pupils stated that they had an idea of what would be included in the lesson after the presentation of the project. They were not used to such a lesson in their school life. Therefore, it aroused their interest at the very beginning. It was obvious that some of them did not know what to expect specifically. They did not have much experience of using such teaching methods. That may be the reason why they said they really liked the lesson and they wanted to learn more about the project. It shows that pupils can benefit more and build on their knowledge if the lesson plans are applied systematically.

PUPILS' EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGIES

In order to revise the lesson plan the student teachers asked questions about the strategies used. Approximately half of the pupils mentioned the name of the strategy directly or the fun they had with the strategy. For example, Ece and Daniela used the strategy press conference in their lesson and it seemingly helped them to maintain the attention of the students to a great extent. Some pupils were even happier with the strategy than with the topic itself. They said that they enjoyed discussing a different topic with friends in such an environment. Secondly, they tend to prefer strategies that include visual elements. Starting the lesson with a related photograph or a short video might trigger their attention to the topic. For example the student teachers in Koc High School used a very simply picture to make pupils consider what it means to be a member of a group or not (see figure 1). This fact leads to the following: Regarding *relating to pupils*, teachers should not only take pupils' interests and background into consideration in order to make them familiar with the topic and relate it to their life itself, but they should also think about how to appeal to their learning preferences. It may be of secondary importance, but it seems to advance more participation and prolongs motivation.

Figure 1: Picture used by student teachers to evoke pupils curiosity

PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS

The pupils found the topics very relevant, but they complained about the lack of background information. Interestingly, older pupils questioned the data and wanted the survey to be applied to a larger population. Younger pupils had more problems with visual presentations and wanted the pictures to be clearer or bigger. They also mentioned that they had to speak in Turkish sometimes because their proficiency level in English was not high enough.

CONCLUSION / SUMMARY

Summarising everything that has been said so far about relating to pupils, one can conclude that during this project the strategies helped a lot to relate the topics to the pupils. Issues such as family and religion are already very relevant topics in the pupils' social surroundings and therefore they like to talk about them. Interestingly, many of the expected conceptions were recognized by the student teachers while teaching. However, even in an open-minded world one will always have stereotypes that are part of many conceptions. That does not have to be a bad thing as long as we are aware of them and learn to deal with them. To achieve that goal this project is a good start to teach pupils more tolerance towards otherness.

DESCRIBING DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Emrah Gültekin, Dursun Karaduman, Ines Weiser

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Describing differences and recognizing similarities is one of the key competencies that pupils should learn in a number of different subjects.

Very often it is only a skill to learn, but in our case it is more because the topics are often closely linked to issues important to pupils' everyday life. Therefore, when discussing these difference and similarities in class, the teacher also learns about the pupils. This is very important, since a teacher needs to understand his or her pupils, so that the optimum environment for teaching is attained. Besides, teachers can manage conflicts in classroom by bearing differences and similarities among pupils in mind and can be a role model for the latter, which is a milestone for gaining self-confidence.

To show the importance of teaching and learning how to describe similarities and differences the chapter starts with some impressions from the lessons. Afterwards, we will take a closer look at the similarities and differences in the teaching groups themselves. The main part however, will be the results of the research, concerning the teaching of similarities and differences during the lessons.

IMPRESSIONS

We found that pupils can get highly motivated by describing differences and recognizing similarities. The 11th graders were the most distinct example for getting motivated by learning something about similarities and differences. They got to

know their peers' opinions about family values while the discussion was going on about the different colours in the map on whether 'children should learn tolerance and respect for other people at home'. They got more and more motivated while the discussion was going on. Moreover, pupils can think critically about the reasons for certain similarities and differences between countries in the maps from the Atlas of European Values if teachers encourage them to think about the differences in the maps. Some of the 9th graders stated that the location of some countries is the main reason for them to be coloured similarly or differently.

Discussing similarities and differences in the classroom may pave the way for pupils to learn respect for others, since taking different values into consideration is the best way to learn to tolerate differences. That way, pupils can empathize with other peers, which was the case for the 11th graders while analysing the map in view of differences and similarities among countries.

TEACHING GROUP (DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES)

During the Turkish-German exchange 42 lessons were held by ten mixed teams. Every team consisted of one German and one Turkish student. It should be mentioned that the Turkish participants studied English language and literature, while the German participants studied geography. That means, the students were teaching together without having the same subject background. However, the content of the EVE-project is not directly connected to one specific subject. Thus the content, as well as the concepts, can be used in a range of subjects. Hence, it is an interesting fact that the lessons took part in different subject lessons during the exchange in Istanbul.

Secondly, one can state that most of the students preferred 'marriage' or 'relationship between children and parents' as their topic. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that all lessons were held in higher grades.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Twenty students participated in the German-Turkish exchange in February 2011; i.e., ten students from each country. Every participant of the project was asked to fill in a questionnaire after each lesson. The results of the questionnaire are the data base for the following sections of the chapter. The questionnaire is partially standardized to get a better overview of the experience of the students during the lessons.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is about statistical data and the second part is about teaching differences and similarities. The part

on statistical data contains information on the lesson (class, type of school, focus question). The part on teaching differences and similarities focuses on:

» *The strategies used.*
» *Whether similarities and differences were discussed during the lesson.*
» *The way of teaching similarities and differences.*
» *How easy or hard it was for the pupils to understand and describe similarities and differences.*
» *Problems that came up during the effort.*

USE OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

To find out, whether similarities and differences were taught during the lessons, the students were asked to tick 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know'. Graph 1 shows the quantitative results.

An interesting point is that nobody chose 'no' and only four students stated 'don't know'. Therefore, one can assume that all students taught similarities and differences during their lessons. But the fact that four students ticked 'don't know' also leads to the question why these students were not able to give an explicit answer.
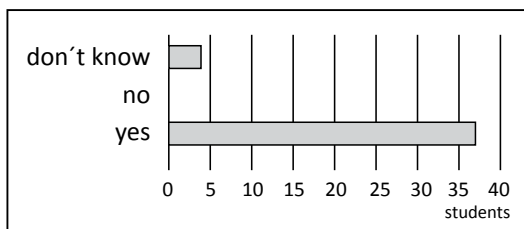
Graph 1: Use of similarities and differences during the lesson

THE WAY OF TEACHING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The participants of the German-Turkish exchange were asked to write down how they taught similarities and differences. All participants wrote down teaching methods as well as strategies. Concerning the teaching methods, one can easily classify the given answers into three categories. These categories are discussions, comparisons and work with the maps of the Atlas of European Values. It should be added that all categories are represented nearly equally. Concluding from this, one can state that these categories were considered as very useful and effective for teaching similarities and differences. All methods used imply processes of reflection. One can suppose that some pupils needed help to describe similarities and differences; i.e., ideas from other classmates or detailed questions, for example.

Especially discussions and comparisons are an adequate instrument to involve pupils in classroom interaction and therefore trigger deeper thinking processes.

UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

To describe differences and similarities certain skills are necessary. One can assume that pupils have different preconditions concerning these skills. Therefore, it was a necessity to research how easy it was for the pupils to understand and describe differences and similarities.

To answer this question a five-step scale was presented to the students. They were asked to tick how easy or difficult it was for the pupils to describe similarities and differences. Possible answers were: very easy, easy, neutral, hard and very hard. It should be added that this data results from the perception of the student teachers. But, of course, it has to be supposed that the opinion of the pupils during the lessons and the impressions of the student teachers during or after the lessons are not necessarily identical. Graph 2 shows the quantitative results.
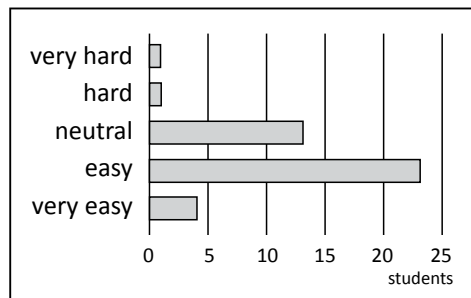
Graph 2: Difficulty level for describing differences and similarities

The graph shows the frequency of occurrence of the ticked answers. According to the results of the questionnaire, most of the pupils found it easy to understand differences and similarities. However, thirteen student teachers ticked 'neutral'. This leads to the question what is meant by the term neutral in this context.

Possible meanings are:

- » *Some pupils found it easy and some pupils found it hard.*
- » *The student teacher was not sure whether the pupils found it easy or not.*
- » *The student teacher was unable to give a statement.*

We suppose that the main reason for ticking 'neutral' was that some pupils found it easy and some pupils found it hard. The different experiences of the pupils can

be seen as one cause. Another cause can be the mood of the pupils or simply the fact that they were taught by external teachers.

The two student teachers who ticked 'hard' or 'very hard' taught together in the same class. Their main reasons for this choice were language problems on the side of the pupils.

To summarize, one can suppose that all pupils were more or less able to describe differences and similarities during the lessons. However, it is difficult to interpret from the data in how far pupils were really able to identify and understand similarities and differences.

PROBLEMS

The participants of the German-Turkish exchange were asked to write down the pupils' problems with the task and to describe these problems. Things listed were: language problems, lack of interest and concentration, method or strategy, work with the maps, working speed. Some student teachers also mentioned that the topic was too specific. This is not surprising due to the fact that the student teachers held only one lesson per class and the lessons were taught in different subjects like English, Turkish, geography or mathematics as well as in different grades. Would it have been helpful to have more than one lesson per class or to have more information about the class before planning the lesson?

The two most frequently mentioned problems were language problems and problems working with the maps. The language problems were directly connected to the age of the pupils. The lack of communication skills in a foreign language also seems to be caused by the social background as language problems were mainly recognized while teaching in state schools. The content as well as the concepts of EVE can be used in a range of subjects. Unfortunately, working with the maps needs subject specific skills and knowledge. For this reason, one can suppose that problems which arose during the work with maps result from a lack of certain skills and knowledge.

The fact that the participants taught only one lesson in each class as external teachers seems to be the main reason for a lack of interest and concentration. In connection with the lack of interest and concentration some student teachers described some typical incidents as for example: pupils, who were playing with their mobile phones or talking and the absence of the regular teacher.

METHODS AND STRATEGIES

Some participants of the German-Turkish exchange group mentioned problems with the methods and strategies. Relating to the questionnaires one can notice

differences in that some methods and strategies were seen as more useful than others. The usefulness depends on the context as well as the focus question. Furthermore, it should be added that the subjective perception of each of the student teachers seems to influence how successful a method or strategy is. While cross-checking the questionnaires one can find different points of view and different perceptions even in one teaching team.

In general, the following methods and strategies were noted as very useful for teaching similarities and differences:

- » *intelligent guesswork*
- » *traffic light game*
- » *discussions*
- » *comparisons*
- » *work with maps*

Intelligent guesswork and the traffic light game are adequate strategies to start a lesson. Therefore, these two strategies were used by many teaching groups. We are unable to conclude anything from the number of times a strategy was used, because it was requested to use every proposed strategy once during the German-Turkish exchange. Therefore, the usage of the strategies does not reveal anything about their usefulness.

CONCLUSION

All in all, it is crucial for teachers to let their pupils become aware of differences and similarities not only within the classroom, but also within Europe where many nations with different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds live together. We got the impression that the pupils, with whom we conducted our lessons, have benefited from the focus questions, maps and various strategies. Therefore, we believe that they were able to grasp what differences and similarities mean and what role they play in their shaping their points of view.

The student teachers in the German-Turkish exchange group have different educational backgrounds, but this did not lead to them experiencing any problems based on their educational knowledge. The subjects which were almost uniformly chosen by the student teachers as the foci for the lessons were 'marriage' or 'relationship between children and parents'. Most of the student teachers were aware of the fact that they taught similarities and differences through techniques, such as discussion, comparison and showing maps. Discussing and comparing items in groups or pairs, brought the pupils to question the reasons for similarities and differences among various European countries.

The results of the questionnaire demonstrate explicitly that most of the pupils grasped similarities and differences easily. Nevertheless, the pupils had to cope with certain problems, such as language problems, a lack of interest and concentration, methods or strategies, working with the maps and the working speed while they were busy understanding the issue of similarities and differences. The most frequent of these problems were language and map based problems. Language problems were hard to deal with in state schools, since the proficiency of some pupils did not enable them to participate in the activities effectively. The reason for the lack of interest and concentration may be due to the single lessons we held. Moreover, the success of some methods and strategies was heavily depending on the context of the lessons and on the focus questions.

All in all, the exchange of German and Turkish groups was really beneficial, because the student teachers' perception of similarities and differences was revealed, possible problems were determined, the effectiveness of certain strategies was tested, the student teachers' awareness of their teaching was measured and the Turkish students' point of view on similarities and differences among various European countries regarding the concept of 'family' was studied.

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

Pınar Akçay, Ece Düşer, Hannes Nozon, Christian Strehmel

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important aims of this project was to help the student teachers recognise the differences and similarities between their cultures and question the possible reasons for both common and different points of view. Throughout the exchange programme, both groups (German and Turkish) observed differences and improved their tolerance by understanding and accepting these differences. Due to the fact that the student teachers deepened their own understanding, they could help their pupils to look beyond the surface and deepen their understanding as well.

In this chapter, our aims are

> » *To give an idea of what we mean by deepening understanding and which concepts we could include in our lessons to deepen pupils' understanding of the differences between countries.*
> » *To show how we used the maps in the Atlas of European Values.*
> » *To tell about our own experiences in schools.*
> » *What the student teachers did and which strategies they used to achieve deepening understanding.*
> » *How the pupils reacted to the lesson.*

WHAT IS DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Deepening understanding cannot be defined as a narrow concept, since it is a whole process on its own. We do not only look at the given data or facts on the surface and absorb them, but we interpret them according to the answers we give to why-questions and how we shape our ideas. In this way, we can improve our understanding of our own values and ideas as we question them and understand, accept, and respect the different views of other people.

The theoretical knowledge that affects our own ideas including some academic concepts and arguments helps us understand possible reasons which lie behind the existence of differences and similarities in attitudes and values between different countries and cultures. Although these academic concepts and theories are quite useful in deepening our understanding of the reasons they focus on, there might be some missing points or some theories might simply be insufficient. Hence, as teachers we should provide some other ways, so that our pupils will be able to analyse the data on attitudes and values critically. Technically, we could either ask why-questions explicitly or make the pupils think about the data or facts implicitly. That is how we hope that our pupils will achieve deepening understanding in our classes.

WHICH CONCEPTS WERE OFFERED TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNTRIES?

Modernisation is considered to be one of the key concepts, which have a great significance in explaining the differences between countries. According to modernisation theory the process of modernisation began when economies shifted from agricultural societies to industrial ones leading to major changes in the labour market. The changes in peoples' living standards brought about cultural and social modernisation. This gave way to individualistic values replacing more collectivistic values in societies. In these 'modern societies' individual freedom and independence gained more importance. Every country is seen as occupying a different place of this modernisation process (see figure 1), which may help to explain differences between countries. However, some differences cannot be explained only by modernisation. We have to include other factors such as globalisation, cultural heritage, language, religion, geographical position, and educational system.

We asked the student teachers whether they explained modernisation and cultural differences during their lessons or not. While a few students explained these concepts and factors explicitly, most of them preferred an inductive approach to make the pupils come up with these explanations on their own. The student teachers used various strategies to achieve deepening understanding. Most of

them used why-questions, so that the pupils could discover arguments on their own and detect whether they have any stereotypes of or prejudices against other countries. Why-questions led to discussions and made the pupils question their answers, which lead to some of the pupils changing their ideas. Other student teachers gave the pupils a chance to see cultural differences through the scenarios they had developed and discover the reasons for differences and similarities with the help of maps. Although different strategies were used in the classes, the fact that there was no correct answer to explain the differences between the countries was emphasized by the student teachers. Even though all of the student teachers had intended to include explanations for modernisation and cultural differences whether implicitly or explicitly, only few of them could do so due to the lack of time.
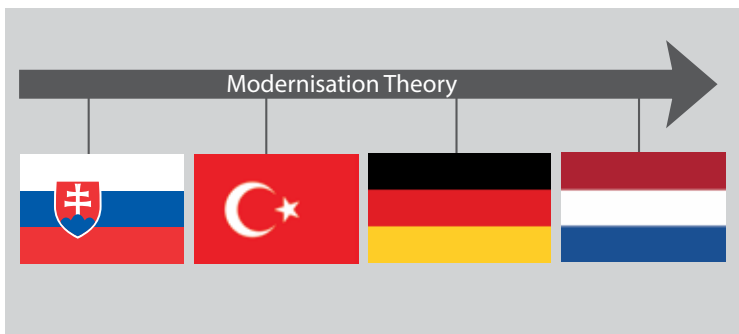
Figure 1: Proposed places of the countries in the modernisation process

MAPS

Using maps should not only be an important item in geography lessons but also in other lessons. Reading maps is very similar to other reading activities, like reading a coordinate system. The only difference between maps and coordinate systems is that coordinate axes show cardinal points and x, y-directions and in contrast to that maps have a scale and a legend.

During our lessons in Turkish schools, all student teachers used maps. About 60 % of the teachers used maps intentionally to deepen understanding and only 14 % of them used maps only to provide information or to clarify points in question (see graph 1).
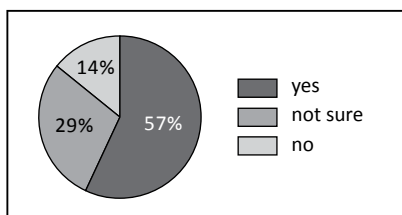
Graph 1: Did you use maps for deepening understanding?

Afterwards, the student teachers rated the influence that using the maps had on deepening understanding and on reaching the aim of the lesson. To do that, they used a scale from 'very high' to 'very low'. 63 %

of the student teachers assessed that the maps had a positive, 25 % a neutral and only 12 % a low influence (see graph 2). That shows that using maps has a high impact on achieving deepening understanding.
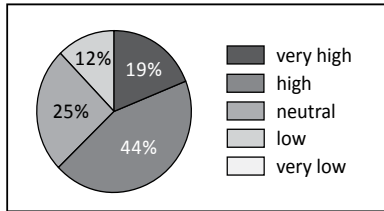
Graph 2: How useful were maps for deepening understanding?
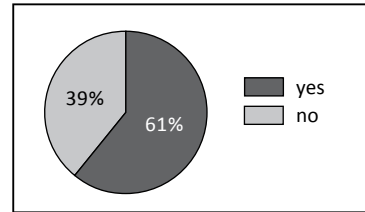
Graph 3: Did you offer an explanation of the map used?

Having seen that the maps were quite useful, we asked the student teachers whether the maps were explained or whether the explanation was unnecessary.

During 61 % of the classes, the maps were explained (see graph 3). Although the pupils were used to reading maps, explanations of the maps were necessary. The pupils had problems with the interpretation of the maps, because they lacked background information and sometimes they could not find the countries that were shown on the maps. They also had problems comparing countries and connecting their ideas to the maps. That shows that more time should be given to reading maps because that would also help pupils improve their general knowledge.

Finally, we must admit that working with the maps may provoke some difficulties at the beginning, but after an introduction period it can help reach deepening understanding.

SUMMARY OF THE APPRECIATION AND PERCEPTION OF THE STUDENT TEACHERS

This section deals with the student teachers' perceptions of how they achieved deepening understanding.

More than 60 % of the student teachers said that they achieved deepening understanding in their lessons (see graph 4). This result correlates with the statement that approximately half of the student teachers supposed that it was easy to achieve deepening understanding.

On the one hand, these results depend on the efforts of the student teachers such as choosing the right type of question and the choice of the strategy (role play and discussion were mentioned as successful strategies). On the other hand, achieving a deeper understanding depends on the pupils and their maturity. Furthermore, motivated pupils help to reach deepening understanding. However, the explanations for the failure of achieving deeper understanding are defined differently. Most of the student teachers mentioned their time management, a

wrong selection of strategies and difficulties in map reading. Moreover, the pupils had less experience and therefore there was a lack of explanations and missing background information. Also some had severe language problems. Finally, the pupils were unmotivated, not concentrated, stressed and tired which had a negative effect on achieving a deeper understanding.

Focussing on the strategies, 65 % of the student teachers said that the strategies were helpful to achieve deepening understanding, especially the strategies chessboard, fish bowl, odd one out, role play, silent debate and what would happen if … (see graph 5).
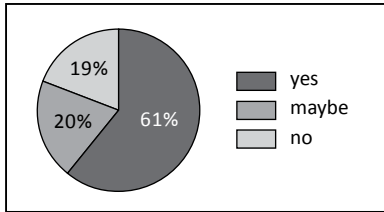
Graph 4: Could you achieve deepening understanding in your lesson?

In contradiction to these positive strategies, the student teachers mentioned the strategies four corner method, intelligent guesswork and snowball as inappropriate to reach a deepened understanding. The main problem student teachers had with the four corner method was the abstract theoretical pattern which the pupils should try to detect. Thus, the content of the task seemed too complicated. The reasons why the strategies intelligent guesswork and snowball were not seen to work were that they are not as valuable as the others in achieving deepening understanding.
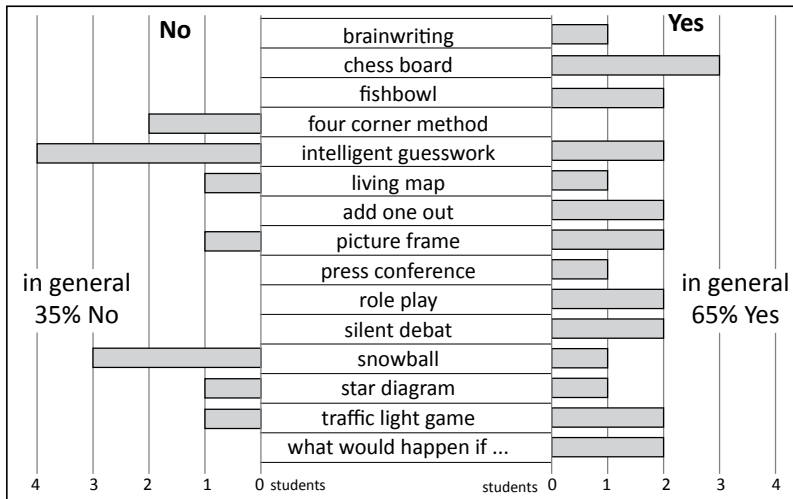
Graph 5: Did your strategies help to achieve deepening understanding?

Finally, we asked the teachers how they responded to a pupil who offered an explanation which they did not fully agree to. The aim of the question was to name some teaching skills that advance deepening understanding. Surprisingly, most of the student teachers used the same skills like asking why-questions. Furthermore, they inspired the audience to start a class discussion and gave the pupils positive

and encouraging feedback. Besides, the teachers contrasted facts on the map with the pupils' statements in order to force them to find out counterexamples. But all in all, nearly every student teacher mentioned that for achieving a deeper understanding it was useful to make sure that no right or wrong answer exists.

SUMMARY OF THE APPRECIATION AND PERCEPTION OF THE PUPILS

According to the pupils' evaluations, approximately 85 % of the pupils saw the lessons as being innovative, new and successful. They emphasized their opinions with arguments like 'we never used these strategies before' or 'we did not use maps in the lessons'.

In nearly 70 % of the classes pupils asked questions about the lessons. In order to comprehend the different graphs, it is important to notice that the student teachers could point out more than just one type of question or comment in graph six. But what kinds of questions were asked? Most of the questions were about misunderstandings due to language problems. The pupils also asked questions about the tasks because most of them were not used to solving these kinds of tasks. This is the same for the maps, as well as the data and statistics, which were also new to them. The pupils mentioned that they had problems with the content of the maps and that they misinterpreted them because of the scale.
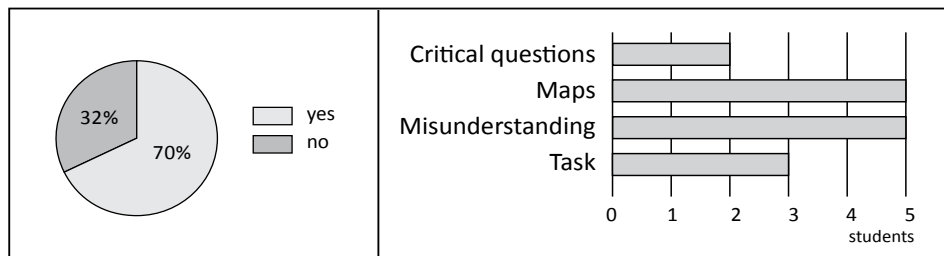
Graph 6: Did the pupils ask questions about the lessons?

Furthermore, the pupils had difficulties in comparing and connecting maps, in reading the black and white copies and in working with the maps in general because they lacked topographical knowledge and background information on the differences between countries. Also they did not always know correct word definitions. Besides, the pupils asked important critical questions such as 'Does the migration background or history of the countries affect the results?' and 'Are 1000 people in every country enough for such a huge project?' This aspect shows that the pupils tried to reach a deeper understanding of the topic.

This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that 84 % of the pupils reacted very quickly to the explanations. All in all, the pupils were quite active and interested.

They made comments, participated in discussions, and gave examples for Germany and Turkey, referring to the topic of the project – 'Family'.

As summary, two aspects should be mentioned: The topic family qualifies for achieving a deeper understanding because of the personal connection to the pupils. The fact that most of the pupils communicated and interacted directly, worked energetic and focused on the topic is proof for that. Secondly, the pupils should be mature enough and therefore we can conclude that deepening understanding is easier to achieve with older pupils.

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING

Janine Groell, Caroline Stern, Pelin Turgut

WHAT DOES CRITICAL THINKING MEAN?

CRITICAL THINKING IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE STUDENT TEACHERS

'Critical thinking…the awakening of the intellect to the study of itself'[1]

Critical thinking as a concept is probably not new to most teachers, and everybody has a definition and explanation of his or her own. However, there is a question about the extent and the scope to which it is known. To illustrate this better, we conducted an interview with each of the student teachers of the project. We asked them whether they had known what exactly 'critical thinking' meant, before they participated in the project. None of the interviewees gave a negative answer. However, ten out of 20 said they had known it but they needed more explanation about what it is and how it can be applied to the EVE classes. In contrast, the remaining ten student teachers said they had already known about it before and they did not need any further information. Aiming to get to know the general picture of this concept that they had in mind, we asked the latter group to define it. The definitions included key words like questioning, reasoning, discussing, synthesising, taking a closer look at things, comparing, matching new information to things already known and coming to logical conclusions. However, the statements differed in tone from some very abstract ones like 'It is like a mirror but you have to have a lot behind the mirror' to outright definitions like 'It is first

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1   Source: http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/define_critical_thinking.cfm (2/2/2011).

questioning your own ideas or opinions in the light of new information and then trying to compare, match and fit the new information into your understanding of a particular topic.' In order to avoid great differences, to include the whole content of this concept and to be on the safe side both in theory and in practice, we find it essential to come up with a comprehensive explanation of what critical thinking really is.

CRITICAL THINKING AS DEFINED BY EVE AND OTHER AUTHORS

According to the EVE framework each lesson has to have four desirable outcomes – one of them is critical thinking. It is necessary to develop a critical perspective because the expression of individual values and attitudes reflects a complex web of ideas and beliefs, which can be difficult to unscramble. Therefore, critical thinking helps to identify the messages within the data and pupils are able to comprehend its subjectivity and to question the assumptions that may underpin it. This is just one dimension of the EVE lesson. In combination with the other stages the pupils will develop a critical understanding of each individual's responsibilities in a diverse society and society's responsibility for the individual. They will also develop a growing sense of what it means to be part of Europe's future.

To achieve this aim in school education, it is necessary to take a closer look at critical thinking as a process. Furthermore, you have to determine how pupils can benefit from it. Cottrell (2005) defines critical thinking as a 'complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range of skills and attitudes' (Cottrell, 2005). According to Cottrell critical thinking as a process means:

- » *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, looking beneath the surfaces, and identifying false and unfair assumptions.*
- » *Recognizing techniques used to make certain positions more appealing than others, such as false logic and persuasive devices.*
- » *Reflecting on issues in a structured way.*
- » *Drawing conclusions whether arguments are valid and justifiable.*
- » *Presenting a point of view in a structured, clear, well-reasoned way that convinces others.*

Furthermore, Cottrell formulates numerous benefits of improving critical thinking skills in school. Pupils develop a better attention and observation and they are more focused while reading. That may be described as the ability to identify key points in a text and to respond to appropriate points in a message. Moreover, they gain knowledge of how to get their own point across more easily. In addition, critical

thinking provides analysing skills which pupils can use in a variety of situations (Cottrell, 2005). On developing critical thinking in school, Elaine Jackson (2002) goes on to say that pupils come to 'know how to learn as well as to know what to learn'. According to her, 'effective teaching is not about covering the content', but about 'uncovering the learning' (Jackson, 2002). That again emphasizes the importance of critical thinking for the future.

ANALYSING AND EVALUATING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

ABOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to analyse how critical thinking was developed in the classes of this project, we collected the data we needed from the student teachers with the help of a questionnaire, which we developed. We asked the student teachers (a total of 20) to fill in the five-item questionnaire as detailed as it was possible. While analysing and evaluating the data, we used graphs to illustrate the data resulting from yes/no questions. Furthermore, we categorised or compared and contrasted the answers we got from the open questions, and then depending on these data we tried to come up with further information and explanations.

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING IN CLASS

While analysing graph 1, it was obvious that almost everyone used critical thinking in their lessons, except for a mere 9 %, who did not prefer it. The results from the questionnaire also reveal that a few students worked with critical thinking only in the second lesson and not in the first one. All student groups, except two, used critical thinking. However, a few of them reported that they could not achieve the aim of developing critical thinking because the pupils' level of English was not high enough to express their opinions.
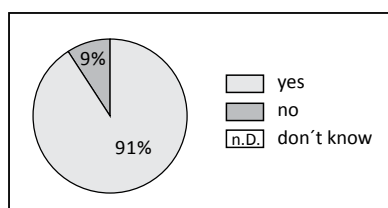
Graph 1: Developing critical thinking skills

In general, all of the student teacher groups used critical thinking in nearly similar ways. Most of them used critical thinking in combination with the strategies they had chosen before, which was not very difficult, since the critical thinking process is already included in the project's strategies or it is very easy to adopt. It is important though to consider how well each strategy is used. Furthermore, one has to consider how the teaching is done and how the communication is carried out.

The majority started the lesson by asking general questions which led the class into the theme. During their strategies most of them applied critical thinking

in combination with different methods. There were some groups which tried to ask deeper questions and replied questions with questions. Additionally, as they reported, they encouraged the pupils to justify their opinions and to give evidence for their results. Furthermore, they mentioned that they told the pupils to compare their opinions with the ones of their classmates and the pupils should think about changing their minds.

Finally it has to be noticed, that most of the groups developed critical thinking by either saving this process to the end of the class or working with it from the beginning. The fact that the student teachers thought that most of the pupils were familiar with critical thinking processes might have played a role in this.

But as graph 2 illustrates, only 25 % of the pupils knew how to think or work critically in a lesson, which means they asked many critical questions and they had lively group discussions in their lessons, while 75 % of the pupils were only partly used to performing critical thinking. This conclusion might stem from the difficulty of getting to know the pupils' thoughts in only 40–45 minutes. Moreover, developing critical thinking and providing something useful in such a short time seems to be very difficult for many students.
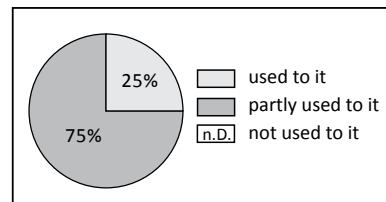
Graph 2: Pupils' confidence regarding critical thinking

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING WITH THE STRATEGIES

In order to find out what the most useful way to develop critical thinking is, we asked the student teachers to name the strategies they used during the lesson. Afterwards, they should explain in what ways these strategies were useful to develop critical thinking in school. The student teachers mentioned the following strategies and reasons:

Intelligent guesswork is a strategy which enables pupils to estimate what things could be like, and in relation to their own knowledge they could find explanations and discuss them. While performing the activities of the strategy odd one out, the pupils needed to delete some statements through thinking in a critical way and they had to explain and discuss why they thought this way. In order to extend the thoughts and ideas of the pupils the strategies silent debate and brain writing were regarded as very useful. These two strategies also helped pupils to develop their own arguments and the arguments of others. With the strategy living map, pupils were encouraged to ask questions about the map, in order to compare their opinions and to discuss the facts shown on the map. In addition, living map was identified as a good strategy to evoke the assumptions of pupils. On the other hand, since the strategy picture frame requires going beyond the image of the picture, the student teachers mentioned that the strategy let the pupils analyse the

information shown on the picture in more depth. The strategy international press conference allowed the students to have concrete and permanent outcomes and to think about possible reasons for differences and similarities. Besides, it gave the pupils a chance to argue from a different point of view. Open fish bowl is a strategy which helped the pupils to reflect their own thoughts about similarities and differences and to compare them with the group. The what-would-happen-if-strategy should also be added to the list because it leads the pupils to look at things from a different point of view and reflect their thoughts. The chessboard-strategy was useful to think in different ways because it included a discussion about the matter. In order to find and explain patterns for similarities and differences the four corner method is also a good choice.

According to the results of this evaluation, it is possible to formulate three conclusions. First, to develop critical thinking in school, many strategies are useful, especially the ones which leave room for discussions in class, in groups or with a partner. This includes thinking about one's own point of view, the opinions of others and related theories to explain the matter. If the strategy allows students to look from a different point of view, it is even more useful to develop critical thinking. Secondly, this should not create the impression that every method automatically develops critical thinking in school. It also depends on the teacher and his/her critical thinking skills as well as on the pupils and their critical thinking level. Furthermore, the questions, which are asked during a lesson, are important, because they encourage the pupils to think in a critical way according to their skills. And finally, it can be said that it is not possible to reach this aim in one lesson and with one strategy. Developing critical thinking is a process which needs a variety of strategies and time according to the knowledge of the pupils.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS WHILE DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING

Although the pupils were used to performing critical thinking and the student teachers expressed that they developed critical thinking in their classes, some problems occurred. These problems can be investigated in three categories as pupil-related, teacher-related and strategy-related. All in all, they are generally easy to handle.

Under the title of pupil-related problems, there are many types of problems that occur as individual or class problems. For example, in one class, there was a student who interrupted the others all the time and distracted the class. Neither specific questions nor warnings nor encouragement worked. Maybe this requires a longer period of time to handle. On the other hand, in another class, there was a group of similar pupils, but when they received a task like presenting the group poster, they felt more responsible and contributed more to the lesson. In some classes, some pupils were not motivated enough and could not concentrate on thinking critically; therefore, the student teachers talked to them individually and gave

instructions in the native language to gather more attention. Actually, both ways worked. To motivate the tired and sleepy pupils in the class, some student teachers used greeting games as energizers and the class became livelier. In another class, there were some shy pupils and the student teachers commented that they needed more time to get to know each other. Nevertheless, they achieved breaking the ice by going straight to the activity groups to guide them. The pupils' lack of knowledge was another problem area, which impeded the process from the very beginning. Hence, the student teachers gave them hints and asked directed and rhetorical questions such as 'Don't you think …?' When the pupils were very silent after seeing a map, when they could not find questions to ask or could not come to the point, or when they were not used to performing critical thinking, the solution was always to ask various types of questions (leading questions, why-questions, example questions etc.). When the pupils tended to stick to their opinions, three things worked: stirring a class discussion, mentioning other opinions and asking questions about them. Time limitation of just one lesson sometimes produced difficulties for both pupils and student teachers. The pupils either could not come up with explanations or wanted to go on with their discussions while the student teachers sometimes needed more time to prepare deeper questions or answers to the questions. A better organisation of the lesson plan, more experience of the teachers and better acquaintance with the class might be helpful. Another problem related to the student teachers was that they could not always find satisfactory answers to the why-questions of the pupils. Although they dealt with these by saying that there were multiple reasons and that there were only 1000 people in the survey for those maps, more background information on different countries and more experience could have been helpful. There was only one strategy-driven problem: The four-corner-method seemed not to be motivating enough on its own, but when a role play was added, the problem was solved.

DEVELOPING LESSONS ON THE BASIS OF LESSON PLANS/STRATEGIES

Kadriye Demirci, Didem Tuğçe Erdem, Elisa Kanera

This chapter aims at supplying information about the following points:

- » *How to develop lesson plans and choose strategies.*
- » *The aims of the lesson plans in general.*
- » *Whether these aims were reached or not.*
- » *If so, how did the strategies help; if not, what were the problems.*
- » *The quality of the lesson plans and strategies as well as of additional information.*
- » *The difficulties experienced during teaching.*
- » *Adaptations applied to the lesson plans.*
- » *How student teachers feel about the lesson plans and strategies overall.*
- » *Whether the student teachers would want to use the strategies in their future classes.*

DEVELOPING LESSON PLANS AND CHOOSING STRATEGIES

During this second exchange, we did not use complete assignments as was done during the first exchange. This approach had proved to be difficult as the assignment were quite comprehensive and therefore needed profound modifications to be done in just one lesson. And to change them that way turned out to be too time consuming. For that reason the approach was changed and this time the student

teachers developed their own lesson plans by combining two or three strategies out of twelve different strategies offered.

The Turkish group developed three new strategies which are star diagram, chessboard, and press conference. Some of the other strategies, as the traffic light game, the snowball and a variety of the picture frame were tested before during the German-Slovakian exchange when German student teachers introduced them to the assignments. Some of the new strategies were the fishbowl, the four corner method, living map, role play and the silent debate. These latter activities were mainly used as main activities because the use of these strategies takes more time (around 20–25 minutes) than other tested strategies like brain writing, intelligent guesswork, the traffic lights game, the star-diagram and what would happen, if … (that lasted approximately ten minutes).

To be able to prepare a lesson plan for forty or forty-five minutes and at the same time to test all of the strategies, the student teachers staged an election process and each pair chose their own activities in a democratic way. In the end each pair selected a main activity and at least one smaller strategy, for example a starter activity. After determining the activities, each pair created their own lesson focus question as for example 'How important is it for European citizens to get married?' under the general heading of the thematic question 'Is Europe a place where family is considered to be important?' Then, each group decided which maps of the Atlas of European Values they wanted to use and which materials they could benefit from such as using different country flags for the press conference and preparing red, yellow and green cards for the traffic light game.

THE AIMS OF THE LESSON PLANS IN GENERAL

The aim of the lesson plans was to help the pupils learn more about the diverse family values in different European countries. To achieve this, they should use the maps of the Atlas of European Values, which show data related to these values and understand the differences and similarities presented in the maps. Furthermore, pupils should be enabled to realize that ideas and values are not stable and even vary from person to person. Finally, pupils should be enabled to critically think about these variations using pair or group work and class discussions.

STRATEGIES AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE THE AIMS OF THE LESSON PLANS

Based on the data collected from the student teachers on whether they think that they have achieved their aims during their lessons in the schools or not, graph 1 has been created.

As can be seen in the chart, most of the student teachers feel that they have achieved their aims. The lessons they held took place on two different days and this provided an advantage for some student teachers who felt that they did not achieve their aims in their first lesson. They revised their lesson plans or strategies and in their second lesson, they were more successful in realizing the aims of their lesson plan.

students

12
10
8
6
4
2
0

| After 1st lesson
| After 2nd lesson

yes   some-   neither   a little   no
        what

n.D. (under neither, 2nd lesson)
n.D. (under no)
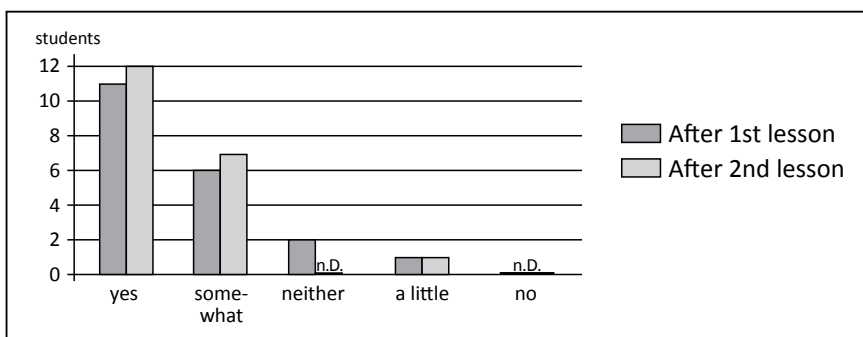
Graph 1: Student teachers' responses to whether they achieved the aims of their lesson plans

The main reasons for some student teachers to change their rating from 'a little' and 'neither' to 'yes' after their second lesson were their adaptations to the lesson plan.

In addition to the pupils' motivation and choice of strategies, the most important reason for failing to achieve the aims was time limitation, which was pointed out by nearly every student teacher. This is also closely linked to the pupils' lack of background information. One of the student teachers' suggestions was that they needed to hold an extra lesson where they only teach the background information. This would lead to a deeper understanding of values, increase pupils' participation in discussions and make them think more critically.

According to all student teachers, the choice of an appropriate strategy was the key to achieve the aims of a lesson plan. Some strategies that were seen to be very successful were international press conference, intelligent guesswork and the traffic light game, whereas the group that worked with the four corner method thought it was a failure. This was due to the fact that the grounding of this strategy proved to be difficult and the explanations for the strategy were inadequate.

On the other hand, some student teachers came up with different ideas to achieve their aims and succeeded using them. Giving the pupils additional information about the project and background information when necessary were the main ideas of these student teachers. They used them in order to motivate students or to increase their energy for the tasks. According to the evaluation forms of the student teachers' and pupils' feedback on the lesson, the strategies and lesson plans created a collaborative and interactive learning atmosphere. Furthermore, most

of the strategies worked well with the pupils and therefore led to the achievement of their aims.

EVALUATING THE QUALITY OF LESSON PLANS

Although the student teachers had to find out how to best combine maps and strategies, some student teachers stated afterwards that the preparation of the lesson was easy, because of the well-explained strategies. Some also found that the strategies were easily adaptable to their group of pupils in relation to their age or level of knowledge. This means that most of the strategies were easy to understand for the pupils, but whenever some student teachers observed pupils hesitating to start an activity, they were able to make them work by explaining the strategy again or giving an example of the strategy in action. Another frequently mentioned quality of the strategies was that they helped pupils to come up with their own ideas and empathy.

Not only the strategies, also the main question of each map itself stirred some discussions, because being inhabitants of one of the countries in the map pupils were curious to find out whether they think the same way as the people interviewed.

In a positive way the lesson plans can be said to contain a huge variety of tasks, such as reading and analyzing a map, finding explanations for the differences between countries, developing critical thinking towards the data of the map, learning interaction and discussing during pair or group work etc.

Almost all student teachers stated that it was very important for the success of the lessons to give extra information on the project and on the development of the maps at the very beginning, because the pupils wanted to know more about these things. Nevertheless, the student teachers had not enough time to include all this information in a 45-minute lesson.

DIFFICULTIES DURING LESSONS AND ADAPTATIONS AFTERWARDS

As stated above, time limitation, lack of background information and the pupils' personality were the main problems for the student teachers. Some pupils were tired, sleepy, shy or just indifferent to the student teachers' lessons as stated in some evaluation forms filled in by the student teachers. A few student teachers had difficulties in using English as the common language, because some pupils were not very good at explaining their ideas in a foreign language. However, most of the student teachers allowed pupils to conduct their group discussions in their native languages. Moreover, some pupils had difficulties in reading maps because their geographical knowledge and analysing skills were not developed very well. Last but not least, a pair of student teachers had problems using the projector and

could not show the maps. Instead they decided to simply talk about the results of the maps. They also lost some time in trying to make the projector work.

Of course, the problems that the student teachers experienced do not stem from the pupils' personalities or the schools' profiles. It is necessary to evaluate our own teaching abilities and things we need to improve. According to the evaluation forms, most of the student teachers agreed on their problems relating to time and classroom management. Furthermore, they agreed that if they had behaved more like a self-confident teacher, they would have gotten better results. Some pointed out that they had difficulties in giving instructions and making students listen to them. Most of the student teachers also stated their inability to give background information or explanations for maps, because they were not geography students.

During the discussion and the sharing of ideas about the lessons with other student teachers, the main reasons pointed out for failing to realize the aims of the lesson plans were choosing an inappropriate strategy for their maps or topic, time limitations and lack of adequate explanation for the pupils. On their second try, the student teachers felt that they better achieved their aims thanks to their revised lesson plans and strategies.

However, even though they were not satisfied with some of the strategies, the student teachers preferred not to change the strategy, but instead made some adaptations to the strategy and their instructions. For example, after realising that pupils hesitated in adding comments on the map at the beginning of the silent debate, the pair of student teachers activated the pupils in their second lesson by writing down their own comments first.

Some of the strategies such as four-corner-method were revised more heavily, because it did not work at all in the first lesson. The pair of student teachers felt that pupils had to be more attached to the topic before using the 'four-corner-method' in the second lesson. Therefore, they came up with some explanations relating to the project and an introduction, in which the student teacher asked the pupils if their own mothers were working and if, in case of 'yes', it affected the mother-child-relationship in a negative way (which was also the main question of the map). For the same reason, they tried to analyse the map in more detail in collaboration with the class and included a role play. Actually, after all these adaptations, the four-corner-method worked better, but not good enough to be satisfied with the effort.

STUDENT TEACHERS' OVERALL FEELING ABOUT THEIR WORK

During the discussion of the student teachers after their lessons, all of them agreed that at least one extra lesson should have been used to give the pupils additional background information on the aims of the project, the importance of the data collected, how the maps were made up, and how these maps can be

read. This was due to the fact that after our lessons we realized that teaching was more successful in classes where the student teachers were able to give a little background information on the project's aim and about themselves (for example who they are, why they are in their classroom and so on) than the teaching that was done in classrooms where this kind of information was absent. It can be said that teaching was more successful since the pupils were more eager to participate in class discussions. Also their responses in the general evaluation were more positive, as can be seen in figure 1. To show what the faces were supposed to look like, the student teachers drew a smiley for the negative, neutral, and positive parts respectively, and then the pupils drew one smiley each. This means that none of the pupils were dissatisfied, just two of them were neutral – because of their low level of English, and the others were satisfied.
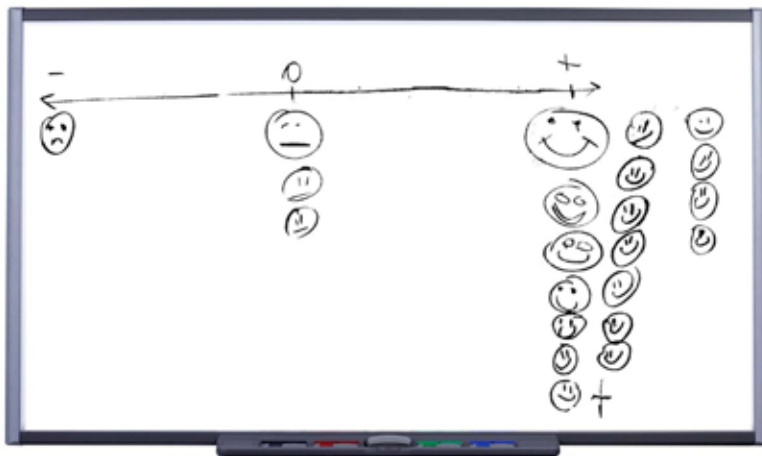
Figure 1: Pupils' evaluation of one of the lessons

However, in other classes the pupils were not interested in the subject matter, played with their mobile phones, chatted with friends, and were not satisfied with the teaching because they could not understand the aims and importance of the project from the beginning.

Some of the student teachers said that the brain-writing-strategy should be modified, since when it is performed in its original form, the pupils get the feeling that the activity finishes in the middle of the discussions. For that reason, at the end of the activity, each group should choose a spokesperson and this pupil should summarise their discussion. Furthermore, it was stated that the four-corner-method and the star diagram were felt to be too complicated for the pupils and they did not work very well, while intelligent guess work, the traffic light game, the role play, odd one out, what would happen, if …, the fishbowl, the snowball, the chessboard and the press conference worked quite well as can be seen in graph 2. Some student teachers argued that if the aim of this project was

to make the pupils active, talkative and 'non-silent', the strategy silent debate should be changed. Furthermore, it was concluded that if sufficient background information was supplied and enough time was given, the strategies rated with low grades could also be applied successfully.

In conclusion, the student teachers agreed that the success of these strategies depends on the length of the lesson, the age of the pupils, their proficiency level in English and their background knowledge.
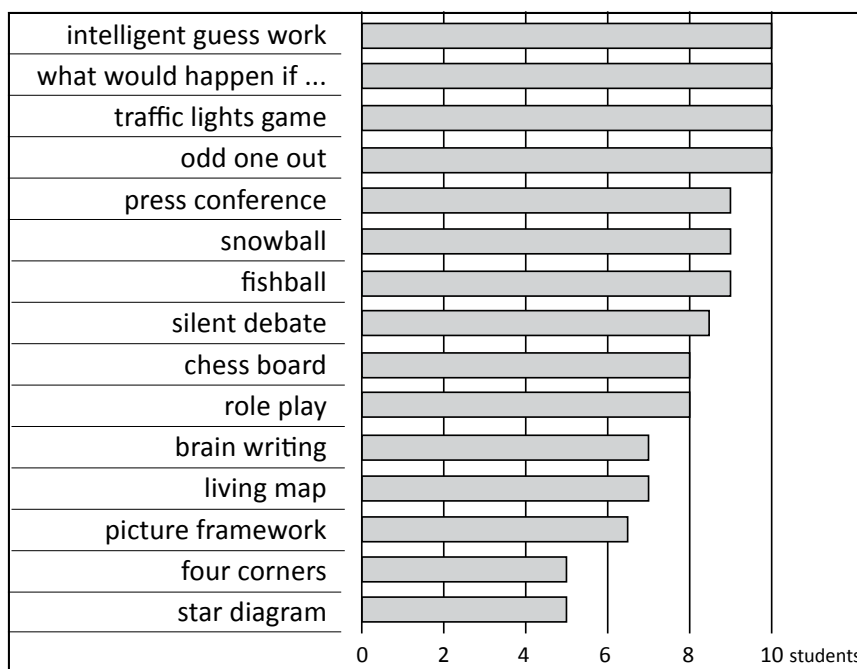
Graph 2: Student teachers' rating of strategies

USING THE STRATEGIES IN FUTURE CLASSES

Nearly every student teacher would like to work with the strategies in the future. Explanations given for the answer 'yes' were, for example, that they are also useful for teaching English or that they are motivating, because mostly there is no 'right' and 'wrong'. Furthermore, some student teachers mentioned that there should be more time for self-preparation as well as discussions afterwards (e.g. after brain writing). One of our group members would use them only in combination with other methods and two student teachers would use all the strategies except the four-corner-method. Only one student answered the question with 'maybe' without explaining it any further.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the student teachers' feedback and discussion after their lesson, the following points can be concluded:

- » *At least one extra lesson should be used for providing background information before the actual teaching starts.*
- » *In order to ensure a successful lesson, the strategies should be chosen according to topics, focus question and thematic question, and also the strategies should be related to each other.*
- » *In order to reach ultimate success, the student teachers should make use of different techniques of classroom management, and be careful about pupils' age, motivation, English proficiency, geography knowledge and social background.*
- » *Lesson plans should be prepared considering time limitations and in case of time restriction some adaptations should be made to strategies.*
- » *The usage of maps, coloured paper or technology (power point etc.) makes the lesson content more concrete and helps the pupils to understand it better.*
- » *Generally, it can be said that all student teachers were satisfied with the strategies and lesson plans, so they think they may use them in their future teaching.*

WORKING IN A MULTICULTURAL GROUP

Fethiye Erbil, Lisa Rogge, Nazile Şen, Markus Siwick

The European Values Education Project is the educational part of the European Values Study. The project was planned to last for three years including eight exchanges between student teachers from Germany, Turkey, Slovakia and the Netherlands. In the first year of the project, German and Slovak students as well as Turkish and Dutch students had mutual exchanges. The exchanges lasted for two weeks, one in each country, during which the groups worked together using the maps of Atlas of European Values, developing lessons and conducting these lessons in schools. They also wrote critiques of the prepared materials. One of the second year's exchanges took place between Germany and Turkey. The two groups first met in Istanbul in February 2011. The results from this exchange along with the evaluations of the student teachers deliver a considerable insight into the dynamics of multicultural groups.

The group was formed by participants aged between 21 and 31, 6 males and 14 females. All of the Turkish student teachers are senior students in Foreign Language Education whereas the German student teachers have a common major in Geography Education.

Evidently, the mother tongues are German and Turkish. In addition to these two languages, English is used as a common language.

Among the 20 student teachers, eleven had previous experiences with multicultural groups such as in Erasmus, Work and Travel and International Projects.

The aspect this chapter is concentrating on is 'working in a multicultural group' and the sub-divisions are: the reasons for attending, the expectations of the participants, the problems and positive outcomes resulting from the program as well as its overall evaluation.

MOTIVATION

At first, we speculated about the students' motivation for taking part in this project. The assumed motives which form the basis of this work, will then be analysed and compared with the empirical facts of the questionnaire.

The first aspect that we considered as being relevant for the students to take part in this exchange project is the non-recurring opportunity and at the same time, the great challenge of teaching abroad. Since German and Turkish students will only be able to understand each other with the help of the English language, this fact might be a reason as well. Moreover, the students' motivation might be to get to know different points of view. Maybe, some of the participants might want to broaden their horizons, which can be a motive, too. Evidently, all participants want to become teachers. Thus, one might be motivated to have a closer look at the teacher training system at both universities and also at the work at school. It might be interesting to see the working conditions a teacher has to face. Another motivation could be the wish to get higher qualifications in relation to professional competences by taking part in this exchange. The last possible reason is the desire to visit another city and learn something about the culture there.

After predicting certain motivations, the actual motives are shown in graph 1.
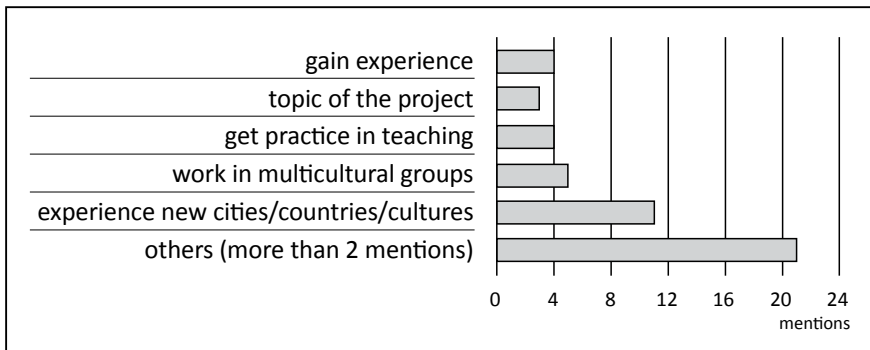
Graph 1: Motivation for participation

Some of the student teachers mentioned the aspect of reading and discussing certain issues regarding Europe (e.g. European values) as a reason for participating in the project. Another participant decided to join the exchange due to the suggestion of some friends who had already taken part in it. For one student, the reason for participation was that it was compulsory to do a project. On the other hand, another participant argued that his motive was to take part in an important project. Several students named the chance to get to know other cities, countries or cultures. Another student stated that he wants to work on cultural perspectives. Since all participants work as teachers during the exchange, some argued that they wanted to learn more about the education system in another country. Some

students tied in with this opinion by stating that they like to apply the strategies in the future. Another essential motive of the participants is to gain an academic experience through this project. Moreover, some people said that the topic of the project was their motive for taking part in it. Several students wanted to work abroad later; so, it was their only reason to join the EVE-project. Others wanted to build new friendships or improve their English.

REQUIREMENTS

In order to achieve a certain goal, it is essential for the student teachers to comply with certain requirements. Due to globalisation and accreting possibilities of network communication, working in a multicultural group is going to be of increasing importance in all of our lives. For this reason, we regard it as highly interesting what the students of the German-Turkish group considered to be necessary for making this work (see graph 2).
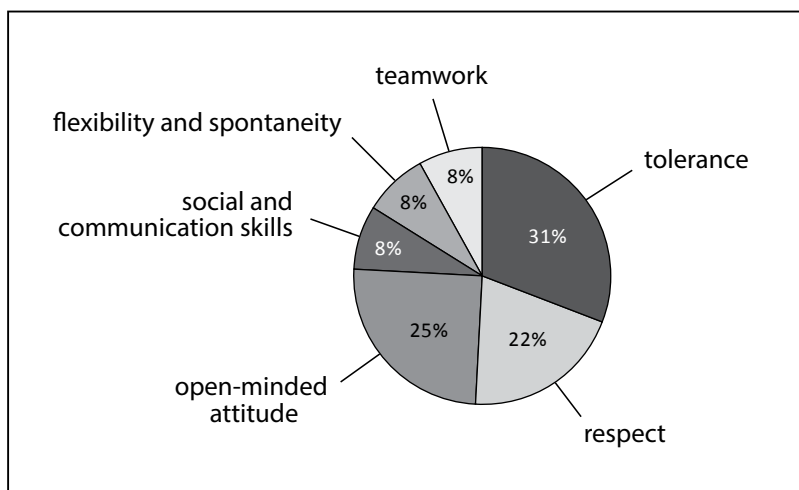
Graph 2: Requirements for a successful co-operation in a multicultural group

There are some aspects that were mentioned by only one or two interviewees, as for example harmony, honesty and sympathy.

Additional requirements that were judged indispensable by a bigger amount of students rather focussed on the general work within groups: social and communication skills, teamwork as well as flexibility and spontaneity.

There are three aspects that were mentioned by the majority of the group: tolerance, respect and an open-minded attitude. Those attributes represent essential guidelines for any multicultural context.

Furthermore, some requirements were stated just once, but represent those guidelines as well, like intercultural comprehension, empathy and the general interest in other cultures.

Thus, it becomes apparent that the group thinks that usual behavioural patterns have a lower importance for the work in culturally mixed groups, whereas basic strategies that deal with multiculturalism are evaluated as more important for a successful cooperation within a multicultural group.

POSITIVE SIDES OF MULTICULTURAL GROUP WORK

All of the participants in this year's project stated that the EVE-project provided a number of personal and academic opportunities for them, namely teaching in a different country, building new friendships, sharing experiences, developing team-work spirit, learning more about cultural similarities as well as differences, learning more about prejudices and getting rid of them, developing new ideas, improving English skills and having fun.

The German-Turkish group rated learning more about the other culture and its similarities as well as differences the highest (see graph 3).
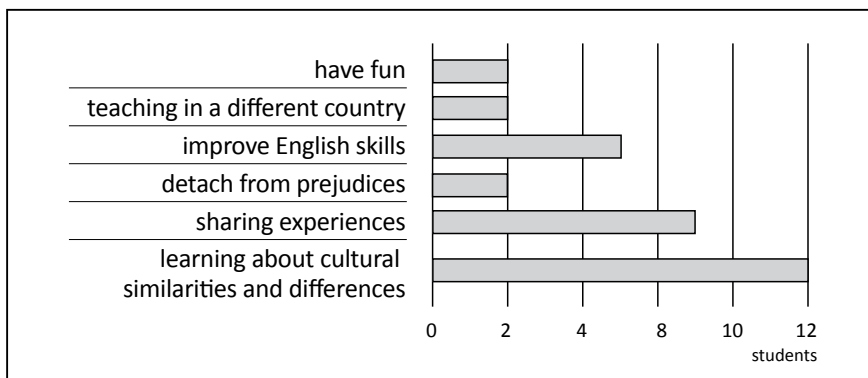
Graph 3: Positive sides of multicultural group work

Actually, we focused more on the Turkish culture this time, since the project took part in Turkey. Especially, through the outdoor social activities which the Turkish group organized, the Germans had a chance to get to know Turkish culture much better. In addition, both groups claimed that they could share a number of experiences during the project which have broadened their horizons to a great extent. When two people from different cultures come together and are really interested in learning about the diversity among cultures, they can experience a lot.

The Turkish group also emphasized that they learned a lot about cultural prejudices. Therefore, they got the chance to get rid of their stereotypes regarding the

German culture, as a result of building new friendships. Thus, getting to know a different culture by spending some time with its people can be a great way of getting rid of one's stereotypes. In our experience, there is a lot to share and a great chance to develop new ideas by looking at concepts from the viewpoint of people with a German cultural background and this is a great way to be more creative.

Furthermore, we could develop an evident team-work spirit during our preparations for instructions, instructions themselves and the publication stage. Most significantly, we did our best to achieve a fair amount of work within the groups. Last but not least, most Turkish participants reported to have had a lot of fun during the whole project.

On the other hand, some of the German groups emphasized the opportunity to teach in a different country, as they were the ones to go to another country and to apply the strategies at particular schools with their Turkish partners.

DIFFICULTIES WHILE WORKING IN A MULTICULTURAL GROUP

In addition to the advantages stated above, the Turkish as well as the German group mentioned certain difficulties while working with partners from another country. Mostly, the participants from both groups reported to have experienced particular problems while using English, which has to be used during the whole group work, as it was the common language for all participants.

Moreover, some of the Turkish students claimed to have had difficulties with language only when the spoken language had to be switched into the native one. In other words, when they needed to talk to other Turkish participants in their own native language, they realized that they could only speak it at a much slower rate.

OVERALL JUDGEMENT OF THE PROJECT

While looking into the dynamics of multicultural groups like the group in this exchange, it is of great importance to also find a place for the feelings of student teachers to have a better picture of the exchange and group work.

We asked every participant of the exchange group whether they judge the result of this cooperation (among Turkish-German student teachers) as successful and fruitful. 20 students out of 20 answered in a positive manner. This is a valuable indicator of the exchange week and its results.

In another question, we asked all the participants how they felt about working with student teachers from another country. Almost all the answers were positive: *good, excited, happy, comfortable, loved it, great, satisfied, really well, self-confident, very good, enjoyable, exciting, very positive.*

Some student teachers explained why they felt so positively by giving reasons such as learning much about another culture.

However, there are student teachers who felt that it was difficult to work with a person from another country because the partners have different ideas and teaching styles, but they concluded that it was an interesting experience, because they learned from these differences. The student teachers believed that they were able to represent and reflect their culture in a meaningful and real way by working together.

Some student teachers mentioned problems like time pressure and stress. These factors inevitably affected the group dynamics.

A different question about feelings was 'How did you feel teaching in a Turkish school?' Similarly, the comments were mostly positive. Some student teachers stated that it was a great opportunity. They pointed out that it gave them a chance to see the school system. A great number of German student teachers indicated that they felt self-confident after teaching in Turkish schools. This is a very meaningful outcome for us, because helping student teachers to increase their self-confidence and teaching skills (even in another language) is one of the aims of the exchanges.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

After explaining the student teachers' views on working in a multicultural group, including its positive sides as well as resulting difficulties; it is also necessary to comment on long-term effects of this cooperation in the eyes of the student teachers.

In exchange projects with people from different cultures, the first step would be maintaining efficient group dynamics and a good working atmosphere. Before the exchange, participants usually have various reasons, motivations and expectations. Whether they will come true is up to how the exchange proceeds. After the exchange, participants have new expectations for the future and we analysed them under the heading 'long-term effects' of the exchange week.

The most common statement from the whole group was 'personal and professional development' (see graph 4). It was top of the list of the Turkish students.

German student teachers put 'friendship' in first place and then 'personal and professional development' which for them has an equal importance as 'understanding of another culture and city' and 'experience in a multicultural group'.

Another interesting result also comes from the German group, as some students mentioned language development like 'improving English' and 'learning Turkish'. However, there is no such data from the Turkish group, despite the fact that all the Turkish participants are studying Foreign Language Education. This is probably due to the fact that Turkish student teachers need to use English as

a medium of communication in most parts of their lives and studies, so they do not think about it or state it explicitly.
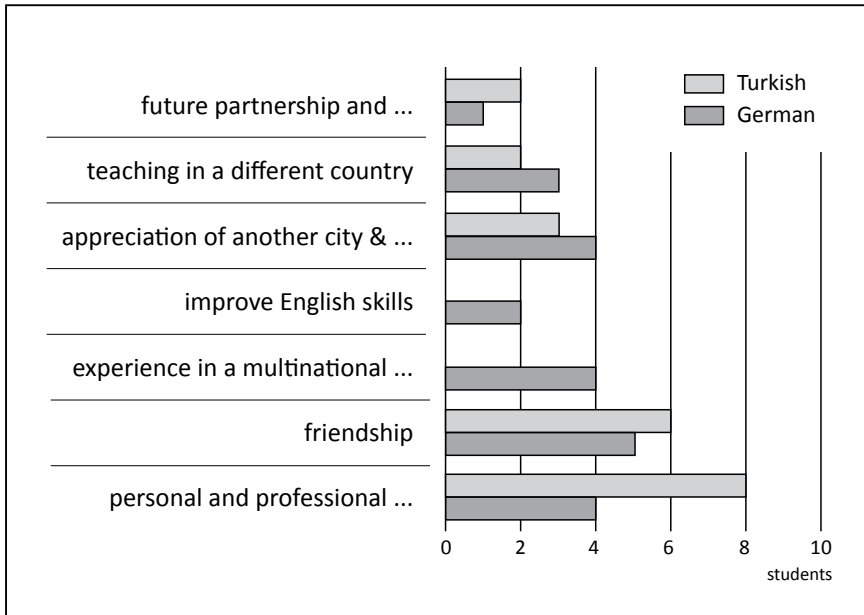
Graph 4: Long-term effects of the exchange

Only one person from the German group and two people from the Turkish group named 'future partnership and cooperation'. However, we are aware of the fact that this small-scale questionnaire is not valid enough to say that participants do not believe in future partnership or cooperation. It might easily be because they did not think of it at the moment of writing.

As we mentioned above, this is the second year of the exchanges and it was the third exchange for some members of both groups. However, as some students graduated or could not attend the project this year for any other reasons, there are new participants along with experienced ones. To be able to really analyse the issue of the 'long-term effects' of the project, it might have been good to take a closer look at the ideas of those participants who attended the project last year and this year. This might have given us some more information about whether the results they expected have come true or not. Unfortunately we do not have the appropriate data. So maybe next time a better approach might be to ask for the participants' expectations right after the exchanges and then again after one or two years and see how many of these future effects have really happened.

III. CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA

DEVELOPMENT OF (GEOGRAPHY) LESSONS AFTER THE AUTONOMY OF SLOVAKIA

Michal Pažický

The political changes at the end of the 20th century led to a completely new situation in Europe. Political liberalisation and democratisation initiated integrating and excluding processes on the national as well as the international level. This new situation also had an influence on Slovakia which became an independent state after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. The foundation of Slovakia was a unique chance to create an independent state without any external political influences. Thus, opportunities and challenges for democracy in public life, as well as questions regarding the national identity, or isolation or orientation towards East or West were emerging. In order to prepare its citizens for the new demands, this evolving state needed a modified education which mainly oriented towards the principles of the educational policies of democratic countries. The resulting long lasting transformational process in education continues till today and affects all subjects – hence also geography.

The new educational goals of Slovakia have been verbalised in the project 'Millenium' in 2001. The main idea of the programme is the assimilation to the educational policy of the European Union and other more sophisticated countries.

Regarding the general goals of education, the Maastricht Treaty[1], signed in 1992, was relevant for geography lessons in so far that an orientation towards EU-citizenship and thus knowledge concerning EU-countries derived from it. In terms of geography lessons, Slovakia also referred to the International Charter on Geographical Education, which includes education for humanism and the discussion about globalisation. Thus, with the help of this orientation, geography

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1   Treaty on European Union (TEU) - 7/2/1992.

lessons had the potential to become an important element in helping to achieve the aims of the 'new society'.

In the context of geography, the most important demands of the project 'Millenium' can be summarised in eight key points.

1. *The openness towards Europe and the world is one of the basic ideas of the educational reform. The geography curriculum does, therefore, include the project Europe as well as the European Union. The teaching of knowledge concerning the social, cultural, economic and political relationships of Slovakia with other European states enables students to get a deeper understanding of current trends and helps to question undesirable prejudices, stereotypes and factoids.*

2. *With the help of the professionalization of teachers and the decentralisation of the structure of the educational system the state loses its supremacy in education, which is supposed to lead to a change in the demand for textbooks. The number of publishing houses of textbooks will be increased. This competition will be helpful in order to implement new ideas in textbooks. However, the most recent geography textbooks (years of publication 2010, 2011, 2012) were still published by VKÚ Harmanec, a.s. publishing house[2].*

3. *Teachers are especially informed about new teaching methods, media and alternative approaches to teaching generally. The most significant innovation is that teachers should not only know 'what' they are teaching but also 'how' and 'why'. The 'why' is of greatest importance for planning geography lessons, because the curriculum does not restrict the selection of topics or methods. Teacher education in geography responded to these modified demands.*

4. *Accordingly, the introduction of modern forms of geography lessons is the aim. In the context of geography lessons innovative concepts were implemented, for example project work, which is designed first of all to lead to a promotion of critical thinking. Furthermore, the students' imagination as well as a development of original solutions will be supported.*

5. *The introduction of a humanistic education is also aimed at. Humanistic ideas are very important for the solution of current problems in the world like human rights, growth of the global population, hunger in developing countries as well as nutrition security of the human race, the increasing*

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2 The history of the publishing house is connected to the military-cartographic institute in Harmanec.

gap between poor and rich countries, ethnic, religious and racist intolerance and environmental problems. Geography can make an enormous contribution to all of these issues talking about the problems implied in them, finding answers to pressing questions and thinking about possible solutions. The selection of topics according to the relevance for everyday life is another challenge for teachers.

6. *This is linked to the necessary reduction of the curriculum content. The four so called 'competences of geography' (the position and distribution of objects, the spatial relations, the relations between humans and environment as well as the region) should focus on what is important and thus, insignificant information can be omitted.*

7. *The expansion of education with the help of interdisciplinary topics (personal and social development, environmental education, media education, multicultural education, traffic education – road safety training, protection of the human life, development of projects and presentation skills) is strived for. Almost all the aspects mentioned can and should be dealt with in geography lessons.*

8. *The improvement of the school equipment is necessary. In order to guarantee adequate geography lessons, new media (PC, Internet, GPS etc.) are essential. The use of them in the context of geography lessons helps students to develop media competence. This does not only imply practice in the use of new media, but also to develop a critical distance towards their possibilities.*

In the course of geography lessons all of these aims can be aspired to. However, geography lessons are particularly suitable for the development of the social and political awareness of students. Geographical education may help students to take part in public life actively and responsibly. Furthermore, it should lead to a consideration of problems not only from a personal or national perspective, but also from a global and international one. In order to acquire the ability to think geographically, it is sometimes helpful to deal with the problem on the local level first. Thus, students will acquire the ability to understand more complex relations and connections on bigger scales, e.g. in the European context. The development of geographical thinking, the constituents of which are values like honesty, fairness, mutual support and collaboration, contributes to the implementation of the main idea of a humanistic and productive education. In addition, it gave answers to the questions which the new state was confronted with right after the political turn and thus helped to achieve the educational goals of Slovakia.

RELATING TO THE STUDENTS

Matej Chlapik, Lenka Lišková, Carola van den Broek, Marloes Willemse

Our goal is to explain the principle of relating to the pupils and to relate it to the strategies and their aims.

First of all, we have to clarify what relating to the pupils means. Relating to the pupils means that you provide them with explanations and examples of their own surroundings. To do that, they get some time to think about the situation on their own at the beginning of a lesson or new topic. Then they can compare their findings with those of the others in order to make it more interesting and valuable for them. Thereby, they may develop a stronger feeling of being a part of the lesson.

The first step gives them opportunity to compare the topic with their experiences, so it becomes more recognizable for them. Thereby they realise that they already knew the answer. Due to the exchange of different opinions, they get to know what the rest of the class thinks about the issue and what they feel about the topic. So, they can see that their classmates' opinions are sometimes similar to and sometimes different from their own opinion. Generally speaking, they can relate all those answers to their own.

Every lesson should incorporate this principle. Thus, pupils can relate the topic to their own place, home, surroundings and in this case, to their own values (and to compare their own values or their family values to the countries' values).

Most members of our student teacher group said, that they understood this principle quite well. They think that because they have also been pupils, they can easily relate topics to the pupils, as they know what pupils feel and think. They think they can straightforwardly identify with them, because they have been in the same situation.

Most of the student teachers thought the strategies were nice and really different from what pupils are used to. This is also mirrored in the evaluation results

that were very positive about the strategies. Most of the pupils told us that the strategies were very 'cool'. To us this means that the strategies themselves helped to reach the aim of relating to students.

Nevertheless, it is up to teacher to make them fit into the lesson or help reach the aim because the strategies are rather general and the teacher has to change them, so they fit the purpose. The use of the strategies did work quite well in all of the lessons that we held because most of the times the pupils gave us the correct answers. They were good at giving their opinions and compare them with the results shown in the map and the overall view of the country. Some pupils were shy, but when you gave them the chance to think about the statement for a second and then give the answer, the whole lesson worked quite well. If necessary the Slovak student teachers could translate difficult words or sentences either into Slovak or English to help the pupils make up their minds or state their opinions.

In this lesson they have learnt to listen to the opinions and statements of other classmates and they have also learnt to tolerate different opinions of other people about the same issue. They have learnt that they should not be intimidated by other opinions and just state their own opinion because everybody's opinion has to be valued.

Picture 1: Pupils duscussing family values

They have also learnt that it is fine to have a different opinion from the rest of the country. Every student teacher in our group taught that the results of the interviews which are shown in the maps are average results of a certain country. Thus, they do not have to be of the same opinion because an average value means that not everyone thinks like that. It is also possible that someone has a more positive or a more negative attitude towards some issues. Pupils should not only

believe that they have freedom of speech, but they should have good arguments for their opinions and they have to consider the opinions of someone else as well.

To achieve this understanding we take two steps: First they compare their attitudes and values to the values of their classmates and then to the values of their country, that is the Slovak people.

The first step can be achieved for example by using the traffic light game. This strategy allows them to voice their own opinion and find out about their classmates' opinions without being influenced by these opinions because everybody should raise their colour simultaneously. Then they move on to the view of the people of the village they are living in, and when they have compared that, they will explore the view of their region. Then they examine the view of the country and when they compared this, they can go to the maps to see what people from other countries think about that topic. Afterwards, they can think about what they have written down and why their opinion differs from the opinion of their country, or why it is similar.

Most of the student teachers started with an attractive question and appealed to the pupils to take part in the lesson. Just to *give the pupils an understanding of the topic*, they converted the theory into informal activities. So, it was easier for them to take part in the latter.

Picture 2: Student teacher trying out one of the strategies

For example, the strategy intelligent guesswork was used by many student teachers, and everybody said this was suitable to relate the topic to the pupils. It is a strategy which aims at getting the pupils more involved with the facts and figures shown in the maps of the Atlas of European Values. The pupils receive a table with either the names of some countries or the data for a number of countries, with the other column missing respectively. They have to fill in the missing information by guessing what might belong where. So, they have to identify with some other

pupils from other countries. This strategy combines many positive aspects. First of all, the pupils have to think of their own, and have to consider what other pupils of their age-group think about the same topic. Furthermore, they have to identify with others which is a good way for pupils to relate one thing to another.

It has to be stressed that in our opinion the most important issue to relate to the pupils is an understanding of the topic of 'values'. It is essential for this values-project because it is a difficult topic which is very abstract.

STRATEGIES

A strategy is also an activity that is used during lessons. Most of us used the traffic light game which allows students to express their own opinions and at the same time see whether others hold similar or different views. The groups discussed the topics a lot as they all had different views, In our experience, this activity does not work as an initial activity because the pupils were very shy and did not know what to say. In some groups this activity worked pretty well because the pupils were interested in the questions and statements, which we used. To summarize, we can say that this strategy depends on the statements and questions used with it. Therefore, the choice has to be done carefully. The questions have to be simple and comprehensible for pupils. In order to succeed with this strategy, their attention has to be caught. Afterwards, another strategy which has to be included in the lesson is chosen. This is sometimes very difficult because we have only a small amount of time.

Another strategy that was used is called intelligent guess work. The pupils had to think about differences or similarities of opinions on a specific topic in a number of different European countries and had to give reasons for it. Then, they compare it to the data represented in the maps. While they were discussing the differences between their opinions and the data shown in the maps, the pupils had to try to understand reasons for why the study produced certain results as shown in the maps. The pupils had the possibility to see and understand different points of view on different issues concerning European values. As there is not one correct answer but many possibilities, it was sometimes hard to stop them to talking. The pupils were interested in the topic and wanted to give the right answer, so they were thinking about it too much. This activity helped to catch their attention. It is very good to use this activity at the beginning of the lesson because it provides them with time to adapt to a new topic.

The third activity which was mainly used in our lessons is the fish bowl. It is a method that can be used for discussing a topic and involving a relatively big group. Yet, this activity was modified by the student teachers because it is sometimes too difficult to organise it according to the given rules. Therefore, we just formed three or four groups and provided them with five questions which

they had to discuss. The time limit for performing the task was seven minutes. Afterwards, one pupil of each group moved to another group and they discussed the questions in the new constellation. After some time everybody was back with the same group from which he or she had started and told his or her home group of the different opinions of each group and after learning about these attitudes they could change their opinions or not. This activity is useful in a big class where pupils like to work in smaller group to tell others their opinions. This helps them to overcome their shyness because it is easier than talking in front of the whole class.

Living map is another activity we used in our teaching process. It is based on the maps and a real context that allows making connections between the abstraction of the map and the stories of people. It is also a very good activity because pupils had to work with the map and then connect it to their own opinions. There are several options possible. Pupils have to know how to read maps or how to analyse them. Furthermore, they have several statements from people of different countries and they have to match a statement with the right country. In our opinion, most pupils liked the guessing part because they want to find more correct answers than their classmates. This activity led to long discussions between pupils and student teachers when the correct matches were displayed.

As we can clearly see there are several strategies which we can use in our teaching. When one of our activities does not work we have to choose another one in a very short time. For that reason it is good for teachers to know a great number of activities and choose the one that fits best to his or her pupils because when it does not work then pupils may keep quiet and not express their own opinions.

FEEDBACK FROM PUPILS AND STUDENT TEACHERS

During our lessons we tried to include the principle of relating to pupils and used suitable strategies in order to fulfil our aims. At the end of the lesson we went through the pupils' evaluation forms and discussed our feelings about teaching. In this section we would like to present some positive and negative comments of pupils, as well as student teachers, and give some suggestions as to how teaching could be improved.

The pupils' evaluations revealed that most of the pupils appreciated to have an opportunity to express their opinions freely and also to find out about the attitudes of other people. The lessons in Slovak schools are usually taught in a traditional way, so for the pupils it was an extraordinary lesson and they enjoyed the strategies. Many pupils were interested in the lessons because they proceeded in a different way than the traditional ones, which are usually full of facts and pupils feel overloaded with information. They were sometimes so interested in the discussion that it took too much time and it was not concluded properly. Pupils

were especially willing to discuss when the question or statement was controversial and they had opposite opinions to those of others. The pupils also liked the organisation of the lessons. They could work in small groups (for example with the snowball strategy) and share their opinions at first within small groups of people who they knew. So, they were not as embarrassed as they could be when expressing opinions in front of the whole class. The pupils also thought that information was more practical and more useful than information presented during usual lessons. They claimed that they learnt new facts about Europe and gained a better perspective on European countries and their values. Moreover, they could relate it to their own country. The pupils also admitted that it is necessary to be tolerant and accept other opinions although it is sometimes very difficult as everybody is different. They enjoyed the strategies and they considered them interesting and useful.

On the other hand, some pupils wrote that they are not used to expressing their opinions and feelings so they felt uneasy when they were supposed to present their attitudes publically. Some pupils wrote that they did not know what to say because they did not know anything about the issue (the pupils were about 18 years old). For others it was difficult to express their opinion about controversial statements such as abortion and divorce. They felt really uncomfortable and found it very difficult to discuss such a topic even in their mother tongue. Sometimes, pupils were not interested in the topic family and therefore they did not want to participate in discussions. Some pupils did not like generalizations and they preferred to present their opinions individually. They would have appreciated it if the lesson was a bit longer so that they could all participate in the discussion. They also admitted that their level of English was a barrier in communication and even though they thought they had some good ideas they were not able to express them clearly.

While discussing our feelings about the lessons we found that the choice of the lesson focus question is really difficult and it must be done properly, otherwise it may cause serious problems. We think that all of us had the experience that pupils are not interested in the topic or do not have an idea on what to say. Another aspect was the creation of a positive and friendly atmosphere. It was vital to do that, so that pupils did not feel uneasy and we think that working in small groups secured this safe environment. It was also useful to appoint a speaker in each group who should summarise the opinions of the whole group. We also agreed on the fact that this principle is very useful for teaching how to be tolerant, how to express opinions politely and also accept other points of view and maybe change them.

After the student teachers' evaluations, we would like to give some suggestions. Firstly, we would like to suggest that some background knowledge should be provided for pupils, so that they can base their opinions and estimations on something relevant. Secondly, each lesson should consist of a pre-task and an

after-task part. It is necessary to prepare pupils for the activity so that they are engaged with the topic and we should also try to activate their previous knowledge of the subject. Moreover, the role of the pre- and after-task should not be underestimated. It is necessary to summarise all points so that they get a clear picture of what they learnt during the lesson. Thirdly, the organisation of pupils should vary: at first they should work individually, than in pairs or small groups and after this as a whole class. They would share their opinions more willingly if they had a chance to discuss within groups at first. And finally, it is advisable to have a second plan just in case that something does not work as it should. In that case the teacher can make use of extra activities which might be more suitable for the needs of the class.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we can say that relating to the pupils is important because then the lesson is more interesting and valuable for them and you really let them feel comfortable and they feel like being a part of the lesson.

DESCRIBING DIFFERENCES (AND RECOGNISING SIMILARITIES)

Lenka Malchova, Zdenko Majer, Pieter Laban

Describing differences and recognising similarities is one of the four stages of the learning approach of the EVE-project. In this section, we will take a closer look at how questions concerning the EVE-project can be answered with the help of this stage. We will show which strategies can be used to describe differences and similarities in Europe. Furthermore, we will show how this principle was used in teaching practice during the exchange programme between the Netherlands and Slovakia. Finally, we will explain how the student teachers experienced working with this principle in real life.

A GENERAL LOOK AT DESCRIBING DIFFERENCES AND RECOGNISING SIMILARITIES

According to the EVE-project the part of principles called describing differences and recognizing similarities is understood as a procedure in which the maps of the Atlas of European Values are used in teaching practice to represent average figures for each country. But it is important to realize that such generalisations may hide or reveal complex differences. Teaching strategies encourage pupils to question the map data by appreciating that there is a range of viewpoints even within their own class. However, the principle can be understood otherwise. Therefore, we would like to present some distinctive opinions relating to the principle.

Some people claim that in most cases the principle is quite clear. Many consider it as very important because pupils can see different and common features within Europe and so they are able to compare these similarities or differences to their

own country. They also claim that the principle is helpful in the way that it gives the opportunity to create an image of each country.

Another group of people think that by using this principle pupils can questions the many national stereotypes often expressed of countries because they can to look at the maps of the Atlas of European Values. So, they may either realise that European countries have many things in common or that they are very different. For this group the principle wants to make pupils aware of other opinions within Europe. They should realise that even though we are part of one great union, we are all different from each other. Furthermore, it helps to encourage pupils to think about reasons why it is like that.

Some participants want to stress the importance of this stage, so they claim that this principle should be understood as something teachers have to use in each lesson. This can be observed very clearly in the EVE exchange project when pupils have to compare their own values to the average result for the values in their country and then to the values of different European countries.

To sum up, most people agree that with this principle that pupils can compare the similar and different viewpoints of European values shown in maps and can come to the conclusion that there are many similarities and differences in Europe.

TEACHING STRATEGIES USED DESCRIBING DIFFERENCES AND RECOGNISING SIMILARITIES

The most suitable way of showing differences and similarities within the European Union is to use the maps of the Atlas of European Values. So, the students are able to distinguish common and different points very quickly.

Each principle of the EVE-project offers help to teachers, as it makes it easier for them to decide how to use the strategies and the maps in the lessons. This is also true for the principle of describing differences and recognising similarities.

Teaching strategies represent a particular approach to learning. When talking about the EVE-project, the main approach is to encourage discussion and debate between pupils. This approach is fundamental to the learning of complex issues.

To handle the describing differences and recognizing similarities principle different strategies can be used.

One suitable strategy is intelligent guesswork because it makes it possible to compare countries. This strategy is useful for exploring issues around the concept of diversity. Another appropriate activity for achieving this principle is called living map. This strategy is suitable because pupils have to think about which statement belongs to which country by comparing it with the data shown in the map.

Differences and similarities can also be pointed out during discussions. So, pupils can find out who agrees or disagrees with their opinions. The whole discussion can be based on the fact that pupils agree or disagree with particular statements,

for example in a traffic light game. The use of this strategy allows students to express their opinions and at the same time they can see whether others hold similar or different ideas.

The principle can also be advanced with the help of the snowball strategy. The latter enables pupils to discuss in a safe environment, i.e. in smaller groups first and then they can participate in a whole class discussion and express their attitudes to different questions. The group work enables pupils to encounter views and perspectives, which they may not have considered.

The open fish bowl strategy gets pupils to think about similarities and differences too. It stimulates pupils to reflect on their own values, to compare them with their fellow pupils and afterwards to put them in a European perspective.

Role-play is another useful strategy which can be applied in this principle, due to the fact that it gets pupils to feel empathy with opinions that are different to their own. During the activity it is valuable to encourage pupils to consider what they know about different European countries and how that may help them to think of different viewpoints.

The last strategy, which has to be mentioned, is odd one out. During this activity pupils have to consider similarities and differences between different countries from the list, because their task is to pick the odd one out from this list of countries.

Many strategies can be used to reach the aim of describing differences and recognizing similarities, but it is also important to make pupils aware of the fact that results shown on maps are general and do not have to be valid for every citizen coming from a particular country.

TEACHING PRACTICE

In the next part we will show how we described differences and similarities within our teaching practice. We mainly used evaluations filled by all student teachers who were participating in the EVE-project exchange project. Other resources are evaluation sheets from the pupils.

At first, we showed the maps to the pupils who should try to explain what they see in the map and what it could mean. With the help of this activity they found out very quickly that there was a huge diversity of values throughout Europe. In the next step we asked the pupils to tell us some reasons why the differences or similarities in the maps existed. We can say that the success of this activity depended on the knowledge of the pupils of particular countries. Generally, all pupils were able to express at least one reason, but this was not really sufficient. So, we made them think more deeply, in order to come up with more different reasons. For a better understanding, we mostly tried to compare Slovakia as the home country of the Slovak pupils to the Netherlands. For example we used the map 'Marriage is an out-dated institution'. The pupils were able to recognise the

differences of values concerning this topic very easily, for example that in the western part of Europe the institution of marriage was not as important as in the middle or eastern part. According to the pupils, the main reason for that lies in different traditions and the religion in each country. The teachers tried to facilitate the discussion and so the pupils were able to come up with other reasons, for example difference in culture, economy and society.
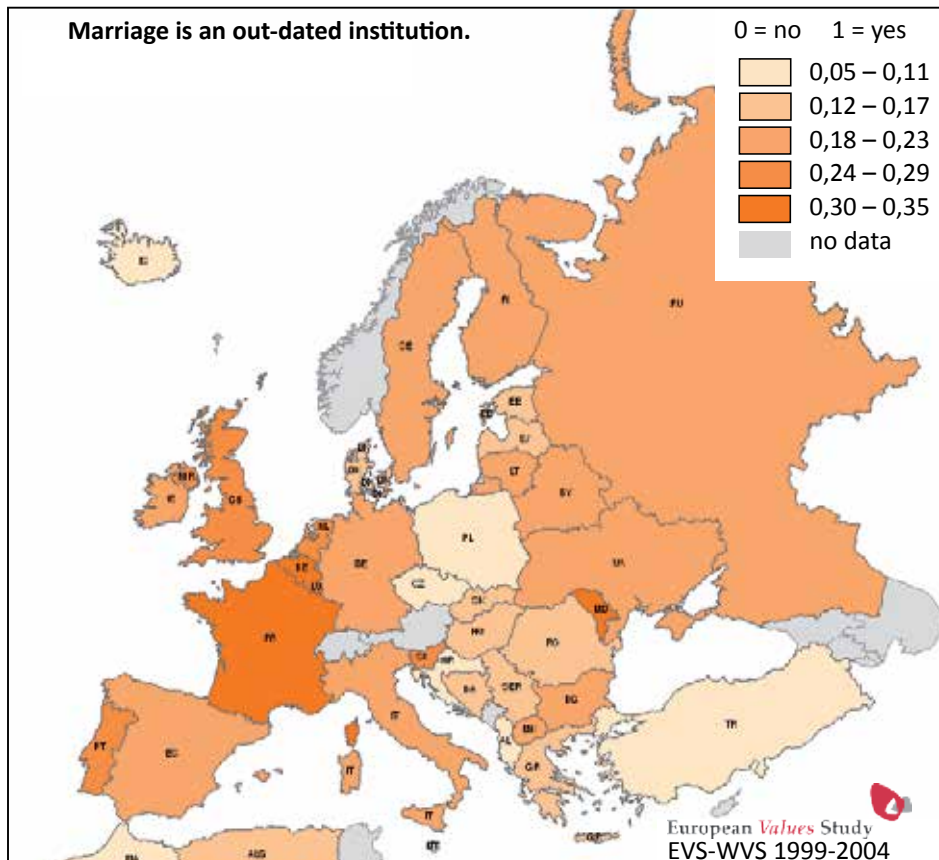

Figure 1: Map showing average opinions on the statement 'Marriage is an out-dated institution'

As for the strategies used one of our favourite ones was the traffic light game. The pupils had to express their opinions or agreement to different statements by showing a red card in case of disagreement or a green card in case of agreement. So, they could see who had the same or a totally different opinion on particular questions. In comparison to the map they could put their opinion in the broader European context. The aim of the following discussion was to motivate the pupils to discover other differences or similarities of European values and to find reasons.

The most preferred activity for describing differences and recognising similarities was the strategy called intelligent guesswork. First, pupils could express

their opinion, but then they had to think about the viewpoints of other European people. As we expected, most of the pupils made guesses according to stereotypes which provided a good basis for the next discussion. Within this discussion they should confirm or refute these stereotypes. The biggest problem was that pupils did not have enough background information about different countries, so they did not know how to decide about a particular country. The crucial part of this strategy was to compare pupils' conclusions to the maps and discuss about them.

The fish bowl strategy was also suitable for this principle. The pupils were divided into two groups where they could discuss the statements. In each group there were some pupils who did not participate in the debate. Their task was to listen to the discussion and remember main points which they were asked to present to another discussing group afterwards. The most visible differences could be seen when discussing about different roles of men and women in Slovak relationships. To support a more controversial discussion we divided the pupils into groups according to gender. So, the two groups could see different ideas, find similarities and understand the way how the other group was thinking.

Generally, the reactions of the pupils to describing differences and recognising similarities were very positive and it did not cause any problems. Very useful tools which we could use were the maps from the Atlas of European Values. These maps provided us with a comprehensible way of seeing differences and similarities of values within different European countries.

STUDENT TEACHERS' EVALUATIONS

In their evaluation forms, all groups of student teachers filled in how they felt about using the four stages to reach the aims of the EVE-project.

At first we think that it was important for both the student teachers and the pupils to know how the stages could lead to answering the main question and reaching the aims of the project. When we take a look at the four stages, describing differences and recognising similarities is the second stage. In the first stage, the aim is to give the pupils a voice of their own: 'How do you think about this subject?'. The second stage is about the question: 'How do other people think about this subject?'. For this, it is important to take a look at the class first because it is possible that there are different opinions on a subject within the classroom. When it comes to EVE, the different opinions of European citizens are rather more important than the ones of the class. The aim of this stage is to make clear that there are big differences in values in Europe, but that there are also countries that share the same opinions about some values. The third stage, deepening understanding and the fourth stage, developing critical perspectives, take a closer look at these differences and similarities and aim to let the pupils find out why they are like that.

The participating student teachers considered describing differences and similarities as really important for them and the pupils. Most of the students understood what the stage was about, and what strategies could be used to explain differences and similarities in European countries.

The student teachers maintained that there are two ways to handle this stage in the classroom. Some of the student teachers wrote down that they experienced differences between the pupils in the class. They also paid attention to this fact because it was important for developing the first stage. Because the pupils have different opinions, it is clear that there are differences.
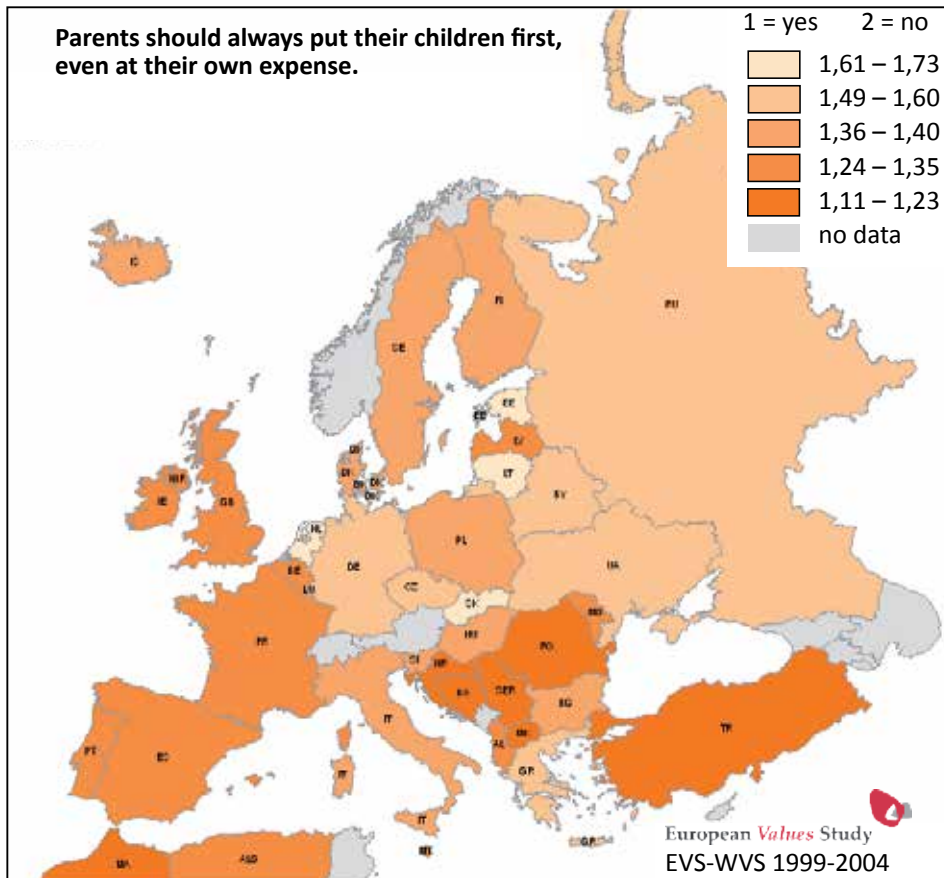
Figure 2: Map showing average opinions on the statement 'Parents should always put their children first, even at their own expense'

Another way of handling this stage in classroom was in combination with the maps of the Atlas of European Values. With the help of the maps it was easy for the student teachers to provide examples for differences, similarities and patterns in Europe. The critical point was that the pupils found out that the maps are not always representative for their own countries because of the fact that the value

questions were asked to only about 500 people per country. Therefore, it was important to make clear that the maps represent averages. For example, in the map above, you see that the Slovakian majority strongly disagreed on the statement 'Parents should always put their children first, even at their own expense.' In this map you see a big difference between, for example, Slovakia and Romania, but you also see a group of Balkan States that strongly agreed on this statement. But some pupils did not agree with the result of Slovakia in this statement. Therefore, it was important to remind the pupils of the fact that it is all about averages.

The strategies most often used for describing differences and recognising similarities were the traffic light game, intelligent guesswork, open fishbowl, role play and living maps.

Intelligent guesswork was one of the strategies that student teachers found harder to use as pupils have to have a lot of background knowledge to guess how other people might think. The strategy to us seems more suitable for the third stage, which is deepening understanding.

Finally it has to be said, that all strategies involve thinking about differences and similarities in Europe. When you check the different steps in the strategies, you will see that at least one step is dedicated to see if there are differences or similarities between regions. The student teachers experienced describing differences and recognizing similarities as a very important step in reaching the aims of EVE.

CONCLUSION

Describing differences and recognising similarities is one of the main principles or stages of the European Values Education project. Therefore, this principle should be included in almost every lesson.

With the help of the maps from the Atlas of European Values pupils were able to recognise similarities and compare differences in European values.

Almost all of the teaching strategies are suitable for this principle because they encourage discussion and debate between pupils, so pupils can compare similar or different viewpoints. However, the most preferable strategies are, for example, intelligent guesswork, living map, the traffic light game, snowball, open fishbowl, role-play and odd one out.

In general, the pupils liked discussing differences and similarities. The only problem was the silence in class that sometimes arose due to the pupils' lack of background information on family life issues in different European countries. Therefore, we believe that some background information should be provided first. So, we can say that the success of these strategies depends on the pupils' background knowledge on particular countries.

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

Sander Bechtold, Thirza Hogendoorn, Vivien Kohútová, Katarína Potočanová

This paper deals with deepening understanding. In the teacher's explanation two important issues are pointed out: key concepts and theories. The students' task is to choose a concept, which can be either change or diversity. They have to focus on this concept in their lessons. They can use theories to support their chosen concept.

Before we started to write this paper, we had read all evaluations about deepening understanding. We had also checked which strategies can be used and which strategies had been used. We detected that most student teachers did not use any key concepts or theories to accomplish the stage 'deepening understanding'. This made it more difficult to add the key concepts to our findings. Therefore, we have written a chapter explaining key concepts. It is thought to help to read between the lines to decide if a group of student teachers has chosen to focus on change or diversity during their lesson. In none of the evaluations have we read anything about theories. Everybody has focused on the strategies they were using and the reason for using it.

KEY CONCEPTS

During the preparations of the lessons we had two key concepts that we could use. The concepts are *diversity* and *change.*

Diversity deals with the reasons for differences in form, function, pattern of distribution etc. It is also about culture, identity and values. Furthermore, it includes how varieties affect different groups and how this is managed.

Another key concept is change. Change expresses the possible differences between the past and present as well as the changes that might occur in the future. More-

over, we can say that change is also about predictions. With the concept *change* you can also answer questions like: 'Which of the different future paths are more or less desirable?' And: 'How can the more desirable outcomes be achieved?'

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE DONE

According to the presentation and our aims, we should have used at least one key concept as we have described in the introduction. When you want to use the key concepts properly, you should adapt your lesson plan to it. After doing so, you should create your thematic questions, according to the key concepts.

WHAT STUDENTS DID

Only one group did not pay any attention to the key concepts and did not use them in their lessons. The key concept that was mainly chosen is diversity. This is probably due to the fact that the majority of the lessons were geography lessons. Nevertheless, some of the pairs used both concepts. For example, they started their lessons with some questions about the diversity shown in some of the maps. Afterwards they used some maps to predict how this could change in the future.

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

Deeping understanding is one way to reach the aims of the project lessons. In this chapter we are going to discuss the most suitable strategies for gaining it. Furthermore, we are going to focus on the most common strategies which the student teachers used during their lessons. According to the final evaluation of pupils and student teachers, we found not only advantages but also some disadvantages in relation to the applied strategies.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

Many concepts and theories claim to help us to deepen our understanding of the reasons behind the existence of differences and similarities in attitudes. However, they do not provide us with all the answers and some theories are inadequate. Pupils should use some of these concepts to question the map data. Then they are in a position to either verify or falsify and reformulate these theories, which helps them to deepen their understanding.

The theoretical basis for our procedure is the assumption that mental processes in the cognitive system are guided by the knowledge domain with information representing the 'what' of the knowledge and procedures describing the 'how' of the knowledge. According to Marzano (2000), the cognitive system can be subdivided into four components (knowledge retrieval, comprehension, analysis, knowledge utilization).

Analysis and analysing is one thinking skill which is used and developed in the process of deepening understanding. So, what exactly is analysing? It can be characterized by several verbs, questions and processes. We may use verbs such as *to outline, to create a diagram, to differentiate*. We can use questions like: *What are the attributes of …? What evidence can you list for …? What are the components, parts or features of …? What patterns or relationships do you see in …?* And in the process of analysing something, we may clarify information by studying parts and relationships, identify attributes and components, determine the characteristics of an entity and identify relationships and patterns.

At the stage of deepening understanding we have two more thinking skills which are generating something and integrating something. In the process of generating we develop new information, meanings, and ideas. Furthermore, we infer by going beyond available information, we predict following events or possible outcomes and we elaborate by explaining. Key verbs might be *to conclude, to predict, to infer, to explain, to elaborate.* In the process of integrating, we connect and combine information, we summarize by restricting information efficiently and we restructure existing knowledge structures to incorporate new information. We use questions like: *Of how many ways can you think of …? If you could sum it up in three to four sentences, what would you say?*

WHY IS DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING AN IMPORTANT STAGE?

In our opinion deepening understanding is one of the most important stages within the lesson. Because of this, most of the student teachers included it in their teaching. We consider it to be useful because sometimes a revision and summary of the topic is done. At times it happens that pupils have to think of their opinion for a second time. In a discussion they have to defend their opinion and have to think of new reasons, why they have that particular opinion. In this way they can develop skills to improve their reasoning. What is more, at this stage pupils may learn that they should not accept a theory without questioning it.

HOW DOES DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING OCCUR
IN THE LESSONS AND SOME EXAMPLES

The student teachers used different strategies for deepening understanding, but not all of them might have been suitable. It is obvious that every strategy has some pros and cons.

Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that the length of the lessons were different. The general opinion among the student teachers was that 45-minute lessons were too short to accomplish this stage well.

Before you can start with deepening understanding, it is important to introduce the class to the subject matter of the lesson. You can do this in different ways. Some of the student teachers decided to produce a mind map; other student teachers used the traffic light game. Nevertheless, there are still more possibilities that could have been used. If you use one of these strategies, pupils have to formulate their opinion, but they also get to know what their classmates think regarding the topic. This is the first step of forming an opinion. However, some more steps are necessary in deepening understanding.

Now, we want to talk about the strategies that were used by the students. One pair of student teachers used the *living-map*-strategy for deepening understanding. The pupils received some statements from people of different countries which were related to the topic of the map. The pupils had to decide from which country each person originates and should also present the reasons for their decision. This strategy gives the teacher a lot of space to ask questions and to tell what the situation in other countries is like. This strategy is also very useful if you want to tell something about the past. For example, the map shows a big difference between Central Europe and West Europe. For deepening understanding you can ask a question like: 'If you think of the political history in these countries, are you then able to give a reason for this difference?' The main focus in this case was at the stage of deepening understanding, but it was hard to make it work properly, because pupils found it difficult to think of reasons. But the pupils liked it and they came up with good options and in that sense they were able to reach this aim.

Intelligent guesswork is also suitable for this stage of the lesson. The pupils have to use their knowledge to decide if a country would agree or disagree on the given statements. After their guessing the maps from the Atlas of European Values are shown to the students. Then they compare their predictions and expectations with the facts shown on the maps. The teacher has the opportunity to use a theory to explain why his or her pupils have that particular idea of another country. A reason for that could be stereotyping. To summarize, both teacher and pupils need to have some background knowledge to use this strategy successfully.

One pair of student teachers used a graph without a legend to reach the stage of deepening understanding. The pupils had to find out what the graph was about. In the beginning the answers of the pupils were rather guesses, but later on they

gave good examples and were able to explain what they thought the graph was about. The role of the teachers here was to question the pupils and name possible alternatives. The aim was to give them a deeper understanding of the reasons for a changing society. Generally speaking, they think they have reached it.

One of the most important strategies to support deepening understanding is the strategy *snowball*. Pupils had to express their own opinions and they had to explain their decision with the help of suitable arguments. The pupils broadened their understanding because they discussed the topic. Their knowledge was a basis for the discussion and their arguments defended the knowledge and understanding of the topic. It really made them think: *Why do I have this opinion and why do my classmates or people from other countries have another one?* In general, showing some maps helped the pupils to understand the topic better and quicker.

We consider all the strategies that were used as suitable for reaching the aim. However, a larger amount of time was necessary to summarise all the opinions and add theories to it.

Some of the student teachers did not use any specific strategies, but just enhanced the topic with the help of different questions. Thanks to the fact that they insisted on the answers, they developed understanding among the pupils. Moreover, as they got closer to the core of the lesson, it was possible to use free discussions or conversations.

POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES

We have noticed several difficulties, which occurred at the stage of deepening understanding. The main problems which arose were language barriers, shyness and lack of time. In addition, some groups were not used to communicating in front of the whole class or among each other. Sometimes the pupils found it difficult to express their opinions, ideas or attitudes. Even if they did so, they were not able to explain their choice or give suitable reasons and arguments for their decisions. These difficulties which appeared during the lessons could be related to cultural differences among the countries. The pupils in Slovakia were brought up in a different way and also in an absolutely different society, which had an influence on them. Because of this fact, it might seem that they were not willing to communicate or even participate in the discussions.

There are several ways how to avoid these hurdles. As a first step we recommend splitting the class into smaller groups of the same age and language level. Another option is that you give the pupils a few minutes to write down their own statements individually. Producing a mind map is also possible. During the discussion they can look at their paper which could help them expressing their ideas. When nobody is willing to say something the teacher can directly ask

someone what he or she thinks. If they do not know what to say, the teacher can ask: 'What did you write down?'

Additionally, the teacher has to be ready to solve any situation that comes up in the classroom. Therefore, the student teacher should be able to encourage the pupils to speak, not to be shy and even to use their mother tongue when it is necessary. Furthermore, the student teacher should help them to translate what they want to say into the target language.

Most of the lessons were not long enough to develop all the required stages. Because of this, deepening understanding and critical thinking were excluded in some cases. Several student teachers complained about the lack of time and not being able to improve deepening understanding during their teaching. Although we had prepared the lesson plans precisely, unexpected events occurred and disturbed the process of teaching. The most frequent reason was the situation in the class.

CONCLUSION

Regarding the pupils' evaluations, they mostly enjoyed the discussions. They had the opportunity to share their opinions and they also used different strategies during the lessons. They appreciated not only the interesting topics but also the different way of teaching. Due to this lesson organization, the pupils learnt more in an indirect way. We have found that strategies like snowball, the fish bowl activity, the traffic lights game, role plays or living maps were suitable for deepening understanding. At the same time, the pupils liked these activities because of their innovative approach. We as teachers, appreciate the flexibility and variability of these strategies. We can use them in many ways and adopt them during the lesson if necessary.

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING

Jakub Medveď, Tomáŝ Matisovskŷ, Maico Suijkerbuijk

Developing critical thinking is one of the four stages of the EVE-project. In this chapter we will explain what critical thinking means, why it is considered to be important in the classroom and how a teacher can help pupils to learn critical thinking.

DEFINING CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is a very complex individual process. On the basis of critical thinking people make well-considered choices using both positive and negative arguments. Most young pupils have ideas about family values. With the help of the Atlas of European Values pupils can understand differences and similarities in the choices people make in different countries.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT FAMILY VALUES

Critical thinking is one of the most important issues in the development of young children. It helps them to become critical citizens in an increasingly complex society. Young pupils are not able to make well-considered choices, so they must learn it in secondary or high school. The development of a young pupil is influenced by many factors, like the internet, television and other people. Before they can develop critical thinking, they need to have knowledge of the related subject. The teacher plays an important role in supporting this process, although he or she cannot provide them with answers because there is not a single answer that is right. The only task of the teacher is to let pupils think about the specific

subject. With questions like what, where, when, why and how, the teacher can make the students think about their decisions. After they have observed some facts and have interpreted them, the teacher can elicit analyses by using these kinds of questions. In close collaboration with the pupils, he or she can analyse and explain the issue, so that it becomes more compact and vivid in the end.

Family is a topic on which every pupil has his or her opinion. Therefore, it is obviously very interesting to have a discussion about this issues concerning family. For example, pupils know a lot about the family life in Slovakia, but they do not know what it is like in other countries. Now the teacher can ask questions as 'What are the differences or similarities?', 'Describe the differences between the importance of family for people in the Netherlands and Slovakia' or 'Why are there differences between these countries?' Pupils could then try to find explanations referring to different aspects, like the economic development, the level of modernization, religious factors, the level of individualism and other cultural factors.

HOW TO TEACH CRITICAL THINKING

There are several ways of how to achieve critical thinking. First of all, we should know about the pupils' backgrounds. This includes taking a look at information about their background because it is the basis for critical thinking. Furthermore, we need to know whether they are used to discussing and presenting their opinions, even if it is not their opinion and if they stand to what they are thinking.

Considering this knowledge, the teacher has to offer some piece of information to the pupils at the beginning. They can then add more information later to build a more complex picture.

After some input by the teacher, the pupils start to activate one of the skills of critical thinking which describes the procedure of adopting and decoding information. This enquiry is important for taking the next step of creating arguments and conclusions, which can be presented in a discussion for example. It is easier to elicit a discussion when the input is either extremely negative or extremely positive, so that the pupils can meet in between.

During our lessons we could see a great variety of pupils' critical thinking. Not all of the pupils we taught were used to presenting what they are thinking. This may be due to influences from the school system, from their family or from society as a whole.

The teacher has to develop the pupils' critical thinking during each lesson. He or she has to show them that this skill is very important in real life, so that it would be useful if it became something almost automatic. The use of this skill can be shown to the pupils in a discussion that aims at, for example, solving problems or interpreting data. This involves personal beliefs and thinking. Each pupil has

to be able to find the best solution for a concrete problem by themselves. In order to draw conclusions, critical thinking can also be activated after the discussion.

Each of the strategies we used was designed to achieve this skill. The only task of the teacher was to guide the pupils through their own ideas and ask questions to elicit a deeper understanding of some problems.
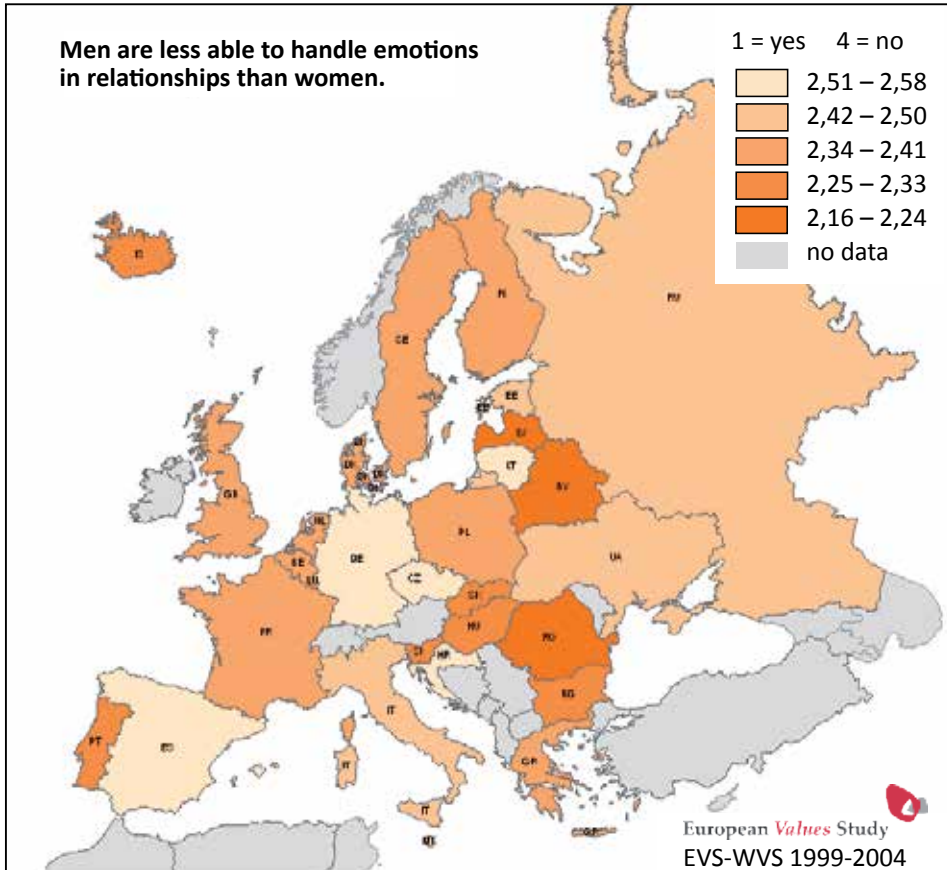

Figure 1: Map showing the jugdement of the statement that men are less able to handle emotions than women

We used the maps from the Atlas of European Values as background information, so that the interpretation of the data was supported by visual representations. In figure 1 you find a map that shows data collected on the statement that men are less able to handle their emotions than women. It is a great example to detect different opinions not only between girls and boys but also between boys alone. While analysing the different opinions, pupils may understand some of the data in a more complex way. That makes the lesson more creative and it might be the beginning of successful critical thinking.

STRATEGIES AS A MEANS TO DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING

The strategies, which were offered to us, were well made. Nevertheless some were favoured more than others.

Nearly everybody used the traffic light game, which aims at presenting the opinion of the students. However, this strategy does not seem to be the best strategy because it only shows whether the students are for or against something. Only the second step makes the strategy more interesting when the pupils are asked to give reasons for having raised the red or green card. This helped them to express and develop their own opinion. It is important to notice that even if everybody raised either a green or a red card, the reasons why they did it could be quite different, according to the individuality of the pupils. The discussions that followed the game, made them think about their choice and develop critical thinking.
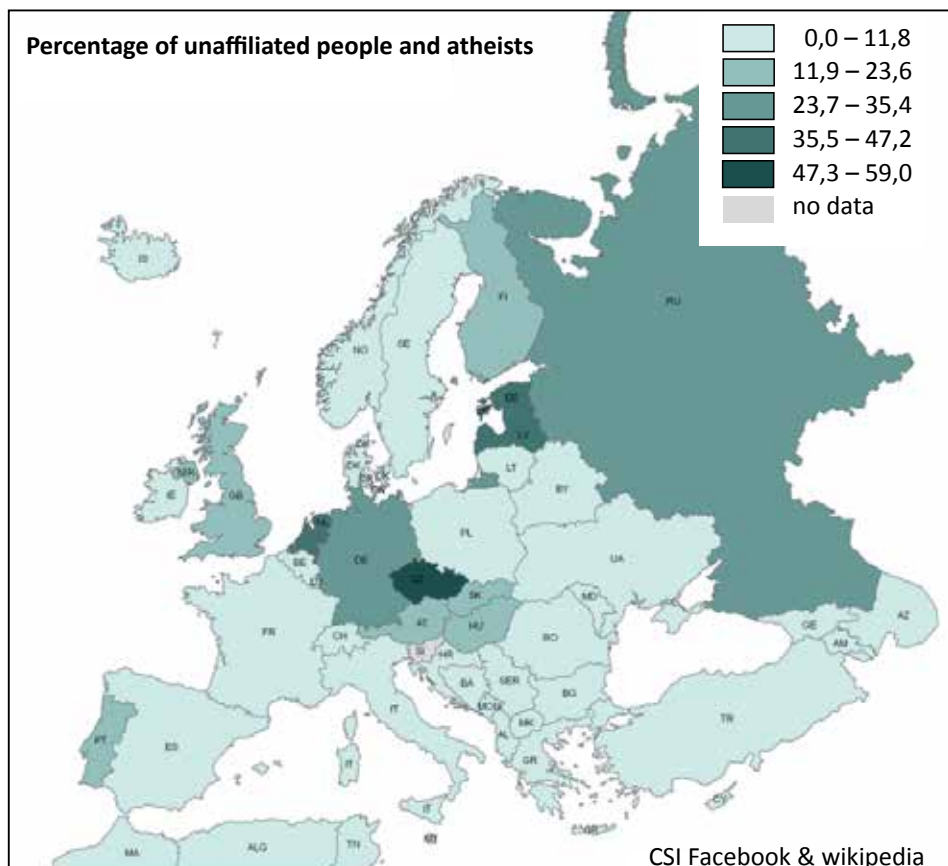

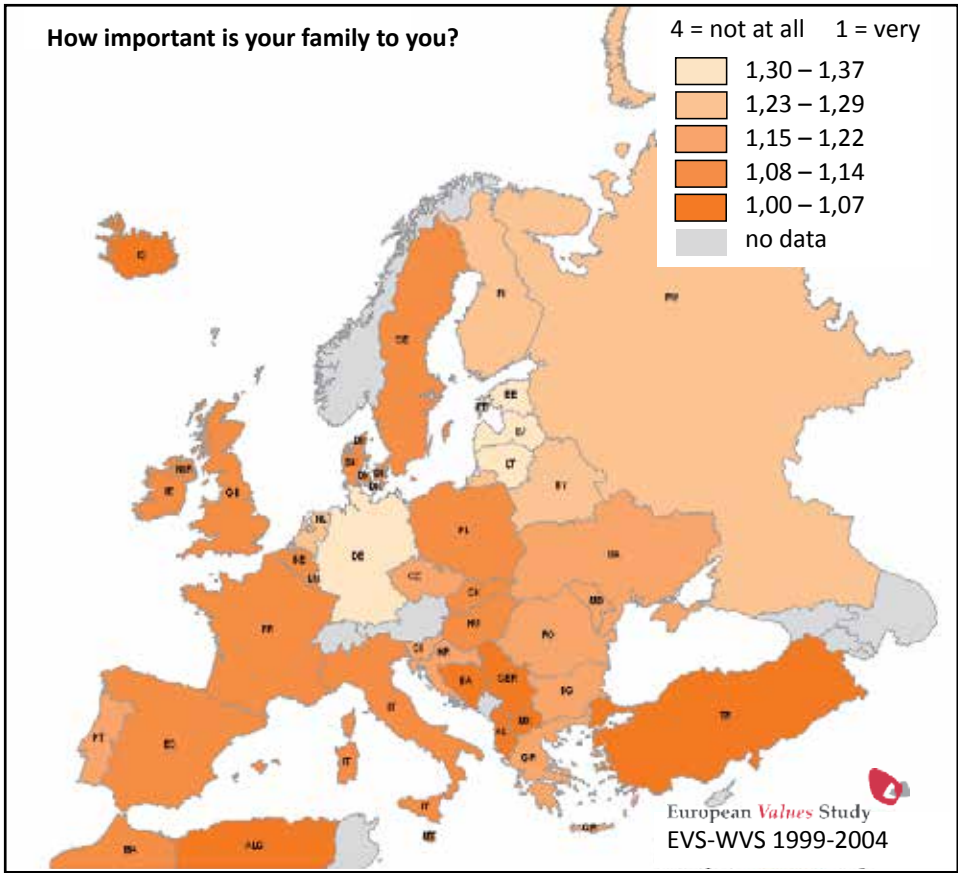Figure 2: Map showing the percentage of unaffiliated people and atheists

Figure 3: Map showing the importance people attribute to family

The strategy intelligent guesswork was very suitable to reach the aim of critical thinking. The strategy works as follows: the pupils are given a table which only shows either the names of a number of European countries or a column of data. The pupils are then asked to complete the table by intelligently guessing which data could fit which country or vice versa. The basis for guessing is their own knowledge, beliefs and feelings. This was the first step to achieve critical thinking. The next step was to make the pupils think about the decisions they have made.

Strategies like these try to get pupils to change their opinions by discovering on the one hand new facts and on the other hand ideas of the others relating to the same data. Reacting to the responses and thoughts of others force pupils to think about the facts in a different manner. As the discussions went on, the pupils were able to reconsider their opinions and after some more supportive materials like maps were used, the pupils started to think about their decisions in a more complex way. In the end, nearly everybody was able to answer certain questions while considering all facts and also their own beliefs.

For example if we look at the maps in figure 2 and 3, we can see a pattern when correlating the data of one map to the data of the other map. Pupils can then see that religion is an important factor for people in some countries and this belief influences their relation to their family.

CRITICAL THINKING IN THE EVE LESSONS

First of all, we came to the conclusion that critical thinking has to be a part of each lesson, because the lesson becomes more interesting with interactions, discussions or other activities. We noticed that the pupils were not really used to it. Therefore, we had to work harder to achieve our aims. We wanted to show them that their opinions and thus their critical thinking are the most important things during the lesson. In many cases we have achieved that.

In some of the lesson, we could observe that pupils started a totally different discussion when they realized that they were given the chance to explore their own opinions, even if they were opposite to everybody else's. We could see that most of them were even surprised that lessons like that could be so interesting. Another point we would like to mention is that having the opportunity to explore critical thinking and listen to each other opened pupils' minds and brought new views to everyone. Probably for the first time, they have heard the opinions of their class mates. It was a great experience to appreciate their interest in hearing the opinions of their class mates and their reasons for thinking that way. The pupils understood that every person has his or her own life and background and lives in a different surrounding, and that all these things can affect their way of living. They could see advantages and disadvantages of different opinions and after all they could choose the best for them.

CONCLUSION

Critical thinking is important for developing pupils' views and also for having discussions with other people. It makes you a better adult because you can make well- considered choices. It makes you think about a problem and develop own ideas. Sometimes schools do not concentrate on developing this ability. They present facts, which are adopted by the pupils without any critical reflection. Critical thinking should be a part of each lesson. In lessons you can discuss freely and train your behaviour in accepting different opinions, but also in presenting and defending your own opinion. Everybody understands that it requires time to achieve critical thinking and that it also relates to your previous knowledge. However, if you start developing this ability as a child then you should not have any problems with it in the future.

DEVELOPING LESSONS

Diana Povalačová, Marjon Leffers, Evelien Scheepens

This part will deal with how we created the lessons, how the lessons went and what the reactions to the lessons were.

STRUCTURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Before the Dutch students left for Slovakia, there had been a two hours consultation with our mentors in the respective countries. During these meetings we received some input about the project, the strategies and some background information. Our task was to read through it and think about which strategies we would like to use. When both student groups met in Banská Bystrica for the first time, we had four hours to develop our lesson, after we had received more general information. We were provided with two questions, which were: What kind of place is Europe, and what kind of place would you like it to be? What kind of society is Europe, and what kind of society would you like it to be? These questions were the main theme of our project, which during this exchange were exemplified by the topic family. With this information in mind, we had to find our lesson focus, using the maps from the Atlas of European Values, the principles and the strategies which we received beforehand.

BEFORE THE LESSON

On our first day we had a couple of hours to prepare the lessons. Most of the groups browsed through the maps to find a topic for their lesson. After having chosen a topic it was difficult for most of the groups to formulate a good lesson

focus question that was expected to have pith and rigour (as we learned during the information meeting, pith and rigour means: making a question attractive, so that pupils want to answer it, and that it is grounded in the subject (Taylor[1])). After having formulated a lesson focus question we started making our lesson plan and started choosing strategies for our lesson plan. The most popular strategies which were used in the lessons were the traffic light game, the fish bowl, intelligent guesswork and living maps. Some other strategies, which were used were role-plays and the four-corner method. We chose our strategies by looking at the stages (relating to students, describing differences, deepening understanding, and developing critical perspectives) and thus we saw which strategies would suit each stage and thereby ultimately reaching the aims of the project. We received a format in which we had to write the lesson plan. In this format we had to explain how we were going to use our strategies. However, some of us decided to adapt and modify some of the strategies, in order to make them more suitable for their own lesson. According to the lesson plan format we had to state the overarching question which we received from our mentor. Furthermore, we had to fill in the thematic question and to facilitate this, examples were provided. Then we had to write down the rationale and an explanation of how the questions are connected with the subject. The next thing we had to state was the lesson focus question. Most of us used at least two strategies for their lesson and some of us used three, depending on the length of the lesson. In the lesson format we had to describe the strategies. The description had to include what the teacher was going to do, what he or she expected from the pupils and the actual assignment which was given to the pupils. Furthermore, debriefing questions had to be defined, in order to find out if the pupils understood the assignment and what they learnt from it. Some strategies required a worksheet, which we also had to prepare. We had the opportunity to use our creativity and imagination while preparing the assignment and worksheets. In the worksheets we also had to state the thematic and lesson focus questions and an explanation of what was expected from them in the assignment. We also had to prepare some educational aids like the coloured cards for the traffic light game or the grids and tables, which were used for several strategies. After having completed all these steps we also had to create a PowerPoint presentation which we used as a visual aid for teaching and showing some of the maps. Therefore, some of us did not use a worksheet but included the assignments in the PowerPoint presentation.

Afterwards we received background information about the class which we were going to teach. We came to know the amount of time, as well as the age and grade of the pupils and also what kind of class it would be, for example, a geography class or an English class. So, we did not know anything about the pupils' level of English and which skills and background knowledge they already possessed. For the Dutch student teachers it was very difficult to have an idea about what

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1 Source: http://flot.presentations2go.eu/P2GTV/viewer.html?path=Flot/2010/11/17/2/video_post.wmv&time=21182.

the pupils were going to be like. Both the Slovak student teachers as well as the Dutch student teachers were not used to teaching 17 to 19 year old pupils.

Figure 1: The first day creating our lessons

DURING THE LESSON

Overall each group had to hold two lessons in the course of two days. The first day was very exciting because nobody knew what to expect from the lesson. Immediately, some of us experienced some unexpected situations with the PowerPoint. One group could not use the PowerPoint at all and had to be flexible and use their lesson plan format as a visual aid for the pupils. Another unexpected situation was that the pupils' level of English was not too good at some schools. This caused some problems with the time management because a lot had to be translated into Slovak and from Slovak into English. Due to the shyness of some pupils, it was also very difficult to get them talking which resulted in some very difficult discussions. Nevertheless, we gave them the opportunity to express themselves in Slovak, which made it somewhat easier for them. However, because of the language barrier, the length and intensity of the discussions were sometimes short and superficial, and not as profound as we had aimed for. Due to the fact that we were not aware of the duration of some of the strategies beforehand, it was hard for us to plan our time. Some strategies took more time than we expected and some were much shorter. Thus, most of us had a back-up plan or extra strategies prepared. Those students who did not prepare this had to improvise (so some Dutch words were taught to the Slovak pupils, or they could ask questions about

the Netherlands). As a trigger for discussions we made use of various questions (some which came from the Atlas of European Values or modifications of these questions, others were debriefing questions which belonged to the strategies) in which we tried to stimulate further discussions. We asked for examples of their reasons and asked controversial questions (trying to imagine the opinion of someone who thinks the opposite) to provoke their thinking. This was one way of lengthening discussions, so the pupils would not only have the chance to answer with yes or no, but they actually had to think about why they feel this way. Another way to lengthen discussions was to ask them why people in another country would think differently. Regarding the organisation of the discussions, most of us decided to form smaller groups or pairs in which the pupils would feel more comfortable to state their opinion. Most of us had the feeling that the pupils really enjoyed the discussions. During the feedback, some pupils stated that it was nice to do something different and that they liked being involved in the process of teaching, instead of just listening.

Some groups of student teachers thought that they did not have enough background information concerning some situations in various countries (e.g. history, economy, culture and religion). Because when the pupils asked them questions, they found it difficult to answer them. In addition, the maps were sometimes difficult to read and especially the legends were occasionally rather confusing. The theories and explanations we had received from one of the researchers from the University of Tilburg gave us some chance to answer the questions but not completely. The information we received helped us while planning the lesson and helped us to decide which strategies we could use.

Owing to the fact that the second lesson was the following day, we had some time to adapt our second lesson. This was very useful because now we were able to improve our lessons. Besides, now we knew what we could expect from the pupils and plan our time more efficiently. At the beginning of the lesson we tried to create a comfortable atmosphere by telling the pupils not to be afraid of speaking up (telling them whatever they feel cannot be wrong) and also having a more suitable classroom by rearranging the seating into a U-shape. In some cases the student teachers had to alter the time of their lesson. Some had to shorten their lesson from 90 to 45 minutes by skipping some strategies (the ones that did not work so well) and some had to lengthen their lesson from 45 to 90 minutes by adding some strategies.

We were also asked us about embarrassing moments while teaching, but when looking at the evaluations of our fellow students, they hardly had any embarrassing moments. The only problem that could be seen as an embarrassing moment was the pupils' silence caused by their shyness, which arose immediately after the student teachers asked a question.

AFTER THE LESSON

When we asked the question 'Which idea did you have for your lesson beforehand, and how did it go finally?' most student teachers responded in a positive manner. In general, all of us were very positive about their second lesson because we had some time to adjust the lesson plan of the first day.

At the end of every lesson all groups asked the pupils to write down their impressions, as well as answers to evaluation questions like: Did you like the lesson? What did you like/dislike? What did you learn? Moreover, we asked them to answer the lesson focus question at the end, so that we could be sure if they understood the lesson and what they had learnt. Some of the pupils' comments were ineffective (e.g. I liked the teachers shoes, or I liked the teachers perfume) and some were not very informative (e.g. I liked the lesson because it was interesting). However, we also received some good critical comments (e.g. use pictures to make it clearer), but mostly if we asked the pupils to be critical they were critical towards themselves (e.g. sorry our English was bad, we were too shy and did not speak that much).

CONCLUSION

The day after the lessons, we were asked to evaluate ourselves in such a way that we had to express our opinion about the preparation and about the lessons. This was done in form of a diagram where we had to place ourselves on two lines (horizontal: lesson, vertical: lesson preparation), according to our perception of the whole process. Most of us were satisfied with both aspects.

Overall, we can conclude that it was a very interesting, inspiring and educational experience which gave us a lot of new information, motivation, and a good starting point to further our teaching career.

WORKING IN A MULTICULTURAL GROUP

Hanneke Kools, Daniela Oleksakova, Róisín White

This project brought Dutch and Slovak students together in order to teach in schools, but also to learn from each other. There are many differences but also similarities between these two nationalities, but we would not have known or realized them if we were not working on this project. It is not easy to put two people together to teach one lesson and it is even more difficult to put two people from different countries together. There was a risk of clash among those two coop-erating people, but everyone knew that, so they had to be tolerant and patient. This experience gave us an opportunity to gain an important international and interpersonal awareness.

MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING THE PROJECT

The motivation for participating in the project was very similar for both the Slovak and Dutch students. The overall reason for the participation was their interest in a different culture, and getting to know a new culture not only by visiting a country for holidays or reading about it. Instead they wanted to interact with people of another culture, take part in the lives of others, work together with them and visit their university. This was a once-in-a-life-time opportunity for many students, for the Slovaks, as well as the Dutch students, to really get to know the 'do's and don'ts' of a different culture.

Many students were also really interested in the teaching aspect of the project, i.e. going to a Slovak school and seeing the similarities and difference between Dutch and Slovak schools. This was the same for the Slovaks when they come to the Netherlands. The students of both countries hoped that by participating

in this project they will gain good experiences that could help them to improve themselves and to become a better teacher in the future.

Many students wanted to gain a wider perspective of the world and get a broader and more informed view on cultural differences. Some of the Slovak students saw the project as a nice opportunity to refresh their English speaking skills. The fact that some of the students could get credit points by participating in this project was hardly mentioned as a reason for joining. A large part of the students were mainly participating for the experience, adventure and for getting to know a new culture.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES

The main reason why the students joined the project was that they could meet and work with students from a different country. The cooperation was described as satisfying or in most cases even better. Some of the students thought the cooperation between the two nationalities was inspirational. The students claimed that the work on the project enabled them to help each other. The two nationalities have many things in common but also differ in various aspects. It is known that Slovakia is called a 'dove nation' and this proved to be true when working with the Dutch students. The Slovaks mentioned that the Dutch students were more dominant when it came to make decisions. The reason might be that the Slovaks tend to adapt quickly and it is easy to cooperate with them because they rarely enforce their ideas. On the other hand the Dutch students appreciated the Slovak attitude towards the project and also towards them as guests. The Dutch students were more confident in teaching because they had more practical experience in comparison to the Slovak students. Sometimes the differences between the two nationalities, mainly the aspect of dominance, caused a little tension but also made everybody more aware and considerate of it. It was easier for the Slovak students to encourage the pupils to speak. The Dutch had to rely on the Slovak students when it came to misunderstandings in the classrooms or when the pupils did not understand, which was rather frequent. In general the students from both countries enjoyed the company of each other and the experience to teach in pairs very much. Moreover the different points of view and also the slightly different mentality were appreciated.

USE ENGLISH AS A COMMON LANGUAGE

The English language was the common language amongst the students. Some students were a little bit shy of speaking English because they did not have a lot of experience. Some of them adapted quicker than others, but eventually everybody spoke English on a satisfactory communicative level. Many of the students had difficulties explaining things properly, but in the end they found ways to do so. Other students saw this exchange as a great way to get used to speaking English, to practice and eventually improve it. The majority of the Slovak students were English language students so they found it a bit easier, however they do not have a lot of opportunities to speak English outside school. On the other hand the Dutch students were more outspoken and less aware of their mistakes or just cared less about them, which was not such a big problem in an informal conversation. The only negative point was that a lot of the students felt that they could not speak as easily and naturally as they do in their mother tongue.

The other point which the students were focusing on when answering the questionnaire was that the pupils had poor language skills. It was hard for the students to get the pupils to talk, they were either very shy about speaking English or they could not find the right words. Some of the pupils did not even understand the exercises.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CULTURES

When two groups from different countries meet, you will always find some differences between their cultures. Even though both of the countries are situated in Europe, they are evidently different, as can be shown by looking at the cultural

dimensions. At first, the distance of power between students and teachers in Slovakia is much bigger than the distance of power in the Netherlands. Teachers and students in the Netherlands are rather on the same level. In Slovakia the teacher has more power. When we analyse the communication, the Dutch students are more direct in saying what they think. The Slovak students communicate well with each other, but are calmer than the Dutch students. We think this could be because of the consequences of the Cold War. During socialist times they were not able to express themselves and nowadays they are still calm and not very outspoken. In the following quote, you can see the difference in treating teachers between Slovakia and the Netherlands:

> **A Dutch student**
> *'I had the idea that the Slovak pupils treat their teachers with more respect. They address them by their last name and have to knock on the door before entering the room. Teachers have more authority in Slovakia then they have in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands in higher education teachers are regarded as equal.'*

The most remarkable difference between the two cultures is that the Dutch students speak louder, make more noise and are very active. The Slovak students are more introvert and do not always say exactly what they mean. They are not used to expressing themselves and sometimes are afraid of sharing their opinion. We also noticed this in the schools where we taught. The pupils were very quiet and sometimes there was even absolute silence. We wanted them to express themselves, share their opinions and discuss with each other, but this hardly worked.

> **A Slovak student**
> *'I surely see differences. We Slovaks are more conservative and this is not about religion, because I am not religious, for example. Our opinions about some topics are so different. We have different views on what a family should look like.'*

The Slovaks are very conservative in their ideas about family. Divorces and homosexuality are exceptional.

As you can read, there are differences between the cultures, but these differences did not cause any problems during the cooperation. The Slovakian group as well as the Dutch group considered the cooperation between the two groups and the cultural differences that played a part in it as very interesting and inspiring.

TEACHING IN A SLOVAK SCHOOL

» *Teaching in a Slovak school was a completely new experience for the Dutch students. Most of the students did not know what to expect from the Slovak schools, so they were very curious. All the students agreed that the pupils in Slovak schools were very shy and that it was not easy to get them to speak. We think this is because they do not dare and are not used to speaking English. We think also that the children are not forced to share their own opinion. The students had to ask a lot of questions and even when they did, it was hard to interact and communicate with the pupils.*

» *Overall, the schools were less modern than the ones in the Netherlands, although they all had the equipment needed for the lesson. The school buildings impressed the Dutch students, because they look totally different than the ones in the Netherlands. You can still see the traces of communism in the architecture of the buildings.*

> **A Slovak student**
> *'I know that the situation in the Slovak school is not perfect, especially the very traditional way of teaching. Therefore, I would like to try and use these interactive strategies to make students speak more, so they can get used to participating in discussions and express their opinions.'*

It was really interesting for the Dutch students to meet and work with Slovak pupils. Furthermore, they liked to observe their behaviour in class and to listen to their opinions. The teachers in the Slovak schools were supposed to be very helpful and friendly. The pupils were also considered to be really friendly. They were very interested and asked a lot of questions about the Netherlands.

PROBLEMS WITH WORKING IN A MULTICULTURAL GROUP

In general, most of the students were very satisfied with the cooperation. The difficulties most of the students had with working in a multicultural group were communication and language difficulties. Being able to express one's opinion in a different language to someone from a different culture was hard for many students.

> **A Dutch student**
> *'Sometimes it was difficult to express my opinion or to say what I mean. I always had to think twice before saying something.'*

TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT EUROPEAN VALUES

We all have certain stereotypical ideas of countries in Europe. That might stem from our personal experience or from stereotypes of attitudes of some nationalities that we have in our mind. We could very often see that the pupils have the same or similar stereotypical ideas of other countries, e.g. that Turkey is a very traditional country with close-knit communities or that in the Netherlands the people are always open-minded and tolerant. With the help of some of the maps we tried to verify or falsify these stereotypes. Furthermore, our aim was to show that within a country there are individuals with totally different opinions than the average of the country. For instance, even though it might seem that in Turkey a man would expect a woman to be a housewife and serve her husband, a video of some interviewed Turkish pupils revealed that they would prefer women to be strong and independent. As we prepared for the lesson, we found out many facts which were new to us or which we did not know before. In general, we learned exactly the same things that we taught our pupils. It means that the results of the maps surprised us and our pupils. Working with the maps was something new for the Slovak students, but for the Dutch students it was nothing special because most of them study geography. Nevertheless, working with maps in such a context was new for them, too. We found that some data on the maps were very surprising. The students appreciated that they gained new knowledge and learned that the attitudes vary a lot throughout Europe. A majority of the students liked to work with the maps, even though they found it difficult at the beginning. We believe that the students, as well as the pupils changed their points of view and learned a lot.

CONCLUSION

The project, which offered the opportunity to and gain teaching experiences in Slovakia using the strategies and principles, was very nice. We met with students and pupils from a different culture, we prepared lessons, that were different from all other lessons we have ever held and we learned to work with someone we did not know before. When we look at all the reactions of the pupils and the students we can say that it was a very good experience. In the evaluation we were asked to find one word to describe the project. All the mentioned words were positive, like for example: refreshing, satisfying, interesting, impressive, good, challenging, experience and developing. We can say that every student is very glad to have taken part in the project and we can also say that the strategies and principles were very useful, so that we will definitely use them in the future.

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 family values in Europe. Student teachers of several universities in Europe worked together in multicultural exchange groups. Their results are presented in this issue.