

## **Teaching about migrants' lives**

The courses created in the context of DEMO are dealing with the life of migrants in many different ways. Some courses offer **knowledge** like theories or statistical facts to understand migration, its causes and consequences. Most of them emphasize the importance of reflecting on one's own **positions** and **attitudes** and their origins via experiences and emotions. Several courses try to improve skills and competences to **empower** students **to become active** themselves, e.g. in educational or everyday life settings.

This intentionally holistic pedagogy implicates several opportunities and challenges. The student's (and teacher's) own experiences, resonating feelings and emotions, their ideas of how to act get a valuable place in teaching. This implies that the diversity of students will probably also lead to discussion, maybe to dissent or even to conflict in the classroom. This is in line with education in democracies since it implies the attempt to instil empathy and understanding. Teaching is not about giving the "correct answer" to everything, but to accompany students on their individual learning path.

Therefore, we recommend teachers to be aware of some ethical principles as follows (Wehling, 1977):

### **Imparting Knowledge**

Teachers are committed to the truth. This inheres a careful research to find recognized, serious, reliable sources of facts. Obviously false facts should be named as what they are.

### **Initiating Reflection**

If the opportunity to reflect on one's own attitudes or beliefs concerning migration is given, it is important that this reflection aims at making students capable of independent judgements. To ensure this, teachers should foster differentiated considerations. Divergent views in general (society, science etc.) and within the classroom (students) should be comprehensively reflected. Therefore, teachers should give room for arguing and be cautious not to influence students with their own opinion. The independent judgement as a result of (joint) reflection is a main goal of (value) education. There is one exception: Positions that are not consistent with core values of democracy, human rights and humanity (like racist or misogynist attitudes) must not stay undisputed and have to be rejected in the classroom.

### **Handling Emotions**



Working with sensitive topics and own experiences, case studies, narratives or art based methods in courses might invoke feelings of happiness, hope or confidence. Also feelings like fear, anger, hopelessness or desperation can come up, especially if persons with own experiences with migration processes are present. Teachers should be aware that these feelings are meaningful to work with. At the same time, an emotional overwhelming situation for students should be avoided. Teachers should decide on the basis of their personal (pedagogical and psychological) skills if they are able to handle it. Invoking students' emotions without proper attendance is no option. Also, the usage of emotions for the purpose of indoctrination (teaching to accept beliefs uncritically) stands in opposition to the aims of DEMO.IL.

### Empowering for Action

The goals of DEMO in the context of migration are closely connected to those of Human Rights Education (UN, 2011), Teaching for Humanity and Core Values of democracy in general. In the end, students shall be empowered to become actors in the field of social professions themselves. To reach this goal, on the one hand teachers should show examples or give hints for action, conduct trainings or act as a role model. On the other hand, they should give weight to the personal interests of students and their personal inclinations and competencies. This should improve the chance of empowerment finally leading to action.

### References

Wehling, Hans-Georg (1977), "Konsens à la Beutelsbach?" in Schiele, Siegfried & Schneider, Herbert (eds.) *Das Konsensproblem in der politischen Bildung*. Stuttgart: Klett-Verlag, p. 179-180. Translation into english:

<https://www.lpb-bw.de/beutelsbacher-konsens.html> [18.08.2019]

United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Pages/UNDHREducationTraining.aspx> [18.08.2019]