

“The Intercultural Glossary Project”

Project outline October 2011

Partners:

Higher School of Economics/Moscow University of Hamburg ; Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb); KULTRANS programme/University of Oslo; Centre for Human Rights Education University of Teacher Education Central Switzerland Lucerne; Norwegian University of Science and Technology; University of Surrey; Human Rights Education Associates (HREA); The European Wergeland Centre

Goal of the project:

The development and testing of a learning/educational tool related to the investigation, negotiation and reflection of concepts in the fields of Education for Democratic Citizenship, Human Rights Education and Intercultural Education

Point of departure

In educational activities in the fields of EDC/HRE and Intercultural Education one often experiences that after a while of working together the question occurs: “Are we talking about the same things?” and soon the call for clarifying “definitions” or a comprehensive glossary can be heard.

Different people can fill key concepts with very different meaning. Think about how contested terms like Democracy and Human Rights are in public debates, but also related concepts such as freedom, tolerance. How these concepts are understood depends on a person’s background – age, nationality, political orientation – and on the cultural influences she/he is exposed to.

Dealing with key concepts in the context of EDC/HRE or ICE has to take it’s starting point from the presumption, that the variety of ways of “making sense” of terms and concepts is an **important resource** for learning processes – if the principles of critical thinking, (self-)reflection and multi-perspectivity are taken into consideration. The founders of the *Intercultural Glossary Project* (IGP), therefore, chosen an approach which doesn’t try to give the “final answers” to questions of definition and understanding, but which tries to provide instruments that enable learners to investigate the possible meanings of concepts, to reflect on the conditions which inform their own and other’s ways of understanding and to negotiate “reasonable” and “adequate” definitions (which, by nature, have to be *working definitions, dynamic and bound to contexts*) with others.

Summing up, the vision of this project embraces several aspects

Vision:

- Democratization of knowledge
Encouraging learners to take their own notions and understandings of concepts seriously and giving them the authority to take part in the social construction of “knowledge”
- Shift of Focus from *truth to meaning*- preparing for intercultural encounter
Instead of trying to “get rid” of misunderstandings by providing definite truths, the focus is directed towards understanding and reflection. This creates awareness for the contextual

character and the historicity of meaning. The enterprise of investigating facets and layers of meaning provides learners with intercultural competence

- Fostering critical judgment

Even if the project bases on a “weak” notion of truth, it doesn’t imply an absolute relativism. Through its working methods, it aims at challenging learner’s capacity to compare and critically judge different assertions, their validity and to take part in the social construction of understandings reliable in given context

Given this rationale, how can a technical solution and a mode of operation look like?

Interactive space:

The IGP bases its activities on the principle of *discussing and reflecting concepts* – in the light of personal understandings and definitions provided in varying sources *and* by the means of *developing* glossary entries, providing both working definitions and examples for the discussions.

This means, a learning resource like an online glossary can be the *starting point* of interactive reflective learning processes and the *result* of these processes (creation of new glossary entries/pages).

This can take the form of face-to-face collaborative working but also the form of online-discussions. A WIKI-glossary seems to be an appropriate technical solution, offering several benefits for educational practice:

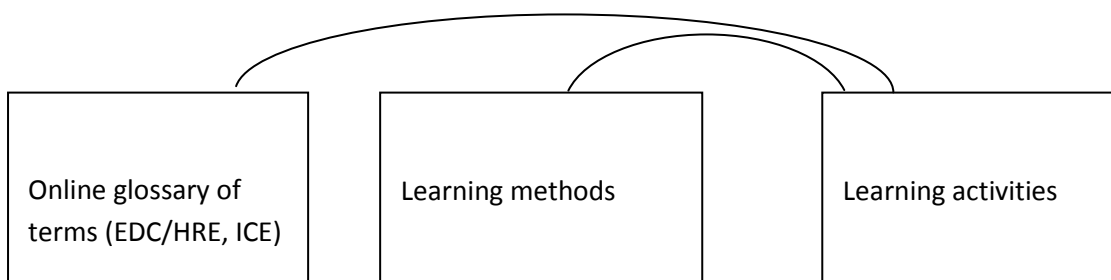
- A participatory learning tool, to be used in training contexts (e.g. initial teacher training) in order to raise awareness of the multi-faceted meanings of professional key concepts as well as in the classroom
- Addressing all aspects of a holistic understanding of competences
 - *Knowledge*
(about different meanings, contexts and historical developments of contexts)
 - *Skills*
(verbal expression, social interaction, analytical/critical thinking)
 - *Attitudes*
(tolerance for different positions, willingness to interact about conflicting/controversial notions)
- Providing space for processes of discussion, negotiation of personal understandings and existing definitions (deconstructive approach) as well as the development of consensual/working definitions (constructive approach)
- Online solution makes learning processes visible and accessible for other educators and learners
- Online solution provides the opportunity of exchange/encounter across geographical, cultural distances
- The tool communicates the value of the *process* of discussing/ generating content even if the results can provide conceptual orientation

In order to challenge learners to investigate and reflect definitions of concepts, a “synchronal” and a “diachronic” dimension of understanding should be included in the learning process as well as in the material “result” (glossary entry):

- Synchronal: an awareness of and capacity to grasp the variety of existing, complementary, contradicting etc. ways of defining/making sense of a concepts
- Diachronic: the historical development of concepts, continuities and ruptures, heritages and impacts

Elements of the project:

- Development of an online glossary of terms
- Development, testing and documentation of learning methods related to the glossary
- Realization of learning activities that will lead to the generation of glossary content (face to face and peer to peer/online)



Target groups:

The target groups of the online glossary (final product) are all stake holders involved in EDC/HRE and ICE, which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning environments.

In a first phase, the project will work with some initial groups of participants, mainly multipliers (university teachers and students, teacher trainers and teacher students, NGO activists) in order to develop content and methods. This works needs, however, to bear the broad target group of the overall project in mind.

The working process:

In phase I. of the project the working processes for the development of glossary content and working methods will consist of the following steps:

- 1) Finding working partners
- 2) Identifying concepts, texts/materials, starting points

- 3) Investigating/exploring alternative contexts
- 4) Identifying and documenting contested areas
- 5) Exploring reasons for differences

In the first phase, tandems will be created among a limited number of participating institutions for the online cooperation. The partners will decide on the details of the working process (the choice of a concept, proceeding from participant's individual (pre-)understandings or from "input"/pre-selected sources, the way of organizing the information etc).

At a next meeting, the first experiences from work with student groups will be discussed (see section "appointments")

The technical solution(s) – the medium of the glossary and the discussion space:

The project will build on the existing WIKI glossary "Confusing Conversations", developed by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education and the NECE network.

While the existing WIKI will remain accessible, a "2nd generation" WIKI will be developed and, later on, published, with entries following a new template.

This template will include 4 core elements:

- Chosen concept/starting point
- Different contemporary and historical meanings and understandings of the concept are presented – including the sources (both as text and by means of visualization (e.g. speaker position chart, time line) and via links to other sites)
- Contested/unresolved areas of understanding and using a term are described
- Possible reasons for these differences are discussed

Including a "chart of speaker positions" visualizing and systematizing dimensions of meaning:

- Aim is to illustrate the complexity of different "speaker positions"
- Aim is to illustrate the historicity and development of concepts
- How can diachronic and synchronic axis be distributed?
- Needs to be transferable to an online structure

example_WIK_glossary_genderequality.pdf - Adobe Reader

File Edit View Document Tools Window Help

2 / 3 143% Find

Chart of speaker positions

year/context	philosophy/literature	national policy document	intergovernmental organisation's document	economical theory
2010			Council of Europe, focus on visibility, empowerment, responsibility	
2006				Bailyn, focus on participation in both the economic and the domestic realm
2000			SADC, focus on equal opportunity, access to resources and benefits or in human rights	
20th cent				
19th cent	Mill, arguing for "natural state of equality"			Engels, linking women's and proletariat's liberation
18th cent	Wollstonecraft, appealing to men's understanding			

glossary proj... Working met... Dokument2 ... GLOSSARY p... example_WIK... DE 11:42