

## Bring a Thing

### From Phase 2: Evaluation of pre-concepts

Phase 2 methods are suitable for activating and questioning the existing ideas of the participants based on an introduction to the subject of heterogeneity in schools. Thus, the aim is to activate the participants' so-called pre-concepts.

#### a) General information

**Time frame:** 30-45 min

**Social form(s):** Joint conversation, preferably while sitting in a circle

**Number of people:** 6-20

**Short summary:** The participants bring an object into the group which they associate with a specific topic that is chosen before for the whole group. First, all participants place their object in the middle of the circle. Then, the participants can speak about their objects or ask questions about the objects of the other participants. They explain what they personally relate to the object and what it has to do with the topic. The result is a discussion of different as well as shared perspectives and associations on the topic.

This method offers the opportunity to speak about differences and similarities that are bound to individuals and embedded in a common discourse. Each participant can contribute their own individual perspectives that might be explained by personal social belonging(s) that are of importance for the person. At the same time, the individual contributions should avoid culturalising attributions and misleading generalisations.

#### b) Description of the method (preparation, working steps, aim)

In preparation, participants are asked in advance to bring an object that they personally associate with a topic, e.g. the topic of heterogeneity, of solidarity or belonging in regard to the learning series. Depending on the topic, it can be very important to ensure a comfortable atmosphere within the learning group. Participants should feel free to tell only as much as they want. No one should feel pressured to share private experiences if they do not want to.

At the beginning of the method, the participants sit in a circle and place their objects in the centre. The lecturer asks the participants if they want to tell something about their own object or if they notice an object they would like to hear more about. The owner of the object explains what he or she associates with the object and how this relates to the topic of the course. The other participants can ask questions or add their own associations or interconnections between the object and the topic.

Step by step, a complex overall picture of the objects within the circle emerges. This also provides a complex picture of both the learning topic and the individual approaches of the participants. In a further step, precisely these diverse and individual approaches can be looked at in their equivalence. The enriching diversity of perspectives, which enables a creative and flexible approach to various topics, becomes materialised by the objects and enables a creative, flexible and multi-layered approach to the chosen topic.

At the end, the results of the conversation can be captured in various ways. Thus, different perspectives can be illustrated on a whiteboard. Together with the participants, the lecturer can decide which aspects of the discussion are particularly interesting for an in-depth analysis. Finally, it should be reflected on how the discussion was experienced within the group and whether everyone felt secure.

### **c) Reflecting questions on how to implement the methods in programmes for (recently) immigrated and refugee teachers**

#### **How can the participants and lecturers contribute their knowledge in a way that does not culturalise?**

In general, very different objects may be brought along by the participants, so that one-dimensional pictures can be counteracted especially in larger groups. However, the way the conversations are conducted depend also on the form in which the initial question is posed. A question like "Bring something typical of your culture" can of course make participants feel that they are assigned to a particular culture and that they are expected to bring stereotypical and supposedly culture-specific objects with them. Therefore, it is important to ask the question more openly and to encourage the participants to bring any kind of object with them, which symbolise e.g. social difference. This way participants are able to choose their object more freely and can also decide on how close the object is related to their own experiences.

#### **What must be considered so that this method does not lead to stereotypes and/or discriminatory categorisations?**

If, despite the above-mentioned impulses, one-sided and culturalising objects and stories are introduced, it is the responsibility of the lecturer to introduce supplementary perspectives. On a meta-level, it is also possible to reflect with the participants why stereotypes are frequently reproduced on certain topics by people and how this could be avoided. This would also be an important reflection to counteract these effects in the course.

#### **How to work with this method in a language sensitive way/how to include multilingualism?**

Since the method is conducted with the entire learning group, the conversation should be in a language shared by all. However, it is equally important that each participant is able to accurately describe his\*her associations. Therefore, small reflexions could be written in the first languages beforehand and then translated into the shared language in small groups.

#### **How to use this method in a participatory way?**

Since the participants can freely choose their object and the corresponding explanations and stories on a topic, a high level of participation is generally guaranteed.

#### **Possible application (for other contexts, e.g. schools)**

The method is well applicable in school. Especially for younger students or pupils, an object can help them to express their own pre-concepts on a learning topic. Especially when using the method in school, it is very important to ensure a secure and open atmosphere for discussions.

#### **Tips**

It can increase the complexity of the explanation if the respective speakers take their object in their hands and put it back into the circle after their explanations.

#### **Example/possible topics**

One possibility could be for participants to bring objects that they associate with the topic of heterogeneity in school. Hereby, the topic of different cultures need not or rather should not be in the foreground, as

everyday objects that are important for people at school can show the heterogeneity in school in manifold ways.

Another interesting topic could be solidarity in society. This is a very universal topic, but which can be experienced very differently by individuals. Various objects can be brought along, which could be very individual and might also be connected to experiences of differences, discrimination. With such a topic it becomes visible how a universal topic is processed in different ways, whereby each individual can access or combine these forms in his\*her own way.

#### d) Further information

Teaching Methods of University Oldenburg (Germany): Mein Mitbringsel. Available at: [https://www.methodenkartei.uni-oldenburg.de/uni\\_methode\\_schulform/erwachsenenbildung/](https://www.methodenkartei.uni-oldenburg.de/uni_methode_schulform/erwachsenenbildung/) [29.02.2020].



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