

Power Flower

From Phase 4: Reflection, de-construction and further development of knowledge and concepts

Phase four includes methods that are mainly aimed at discussion and reflection in connection with dealing with heterogeneity in schools. The methods are intended to support participants and lecturers in the programmes in taking up and discussing not only the topics themselves, but also the social controversies concerning social differences and group constructions.

a) General information

Time frame: 45 min

Social form(s): individual work, plenary discussion

Number of people: whole group

Short summary: The participants reflect on social power relations with the help of a picture of a flower, that includes different social categories which are illustrated in flower inner and outer flower petal each. Each category is divided into an expression of the category that is dominant on the one hand and marginalised on the other. In individual work, the participants first assign themselves to the various social categories and whether they belong to a privileged or a non-privileged group. This is followed by a discussion in which the construction of various social categories and power relations is examined. Together, ways are required to overcome existing power hierarchies, to deconstruct social categories and thus to express criticism of social injustice.

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

The goal of the method is the reflection of individual social positions and multi-layered group affiliations as well as general social power hierarchies.

At the beginning the worksheet with a visualisation of the "Power Flower" has to be explained (different visualisations of the Power Flower can be found online). The inner part of the flower should present characteristics that belong to human identifications, such as social and cultural background, gender, place of residence, etc. The inner petals show groups that are generally privileged, while the outer petals show categories that are generally not privileged. Some examples should be discussed for clarification. Hereby, it is important to point out that these categories of difference and social groups are socially constructed and not “naturally given”, but that they nevertheless have an effect on real life. These categories and the categorisation of privileged and non-privileged (or dominant and dominated) groups can be done analogously to the “List of 15 bipolar hierarchical difference categories” (see. 2.1. Discourse on Heterogeneity in School). Additional categories can also be added (by the participants) if required.

During the individual work phase the participants fill out the flower petals by assigning themselves to the privileged or non-privileged expression of each category. The participants decide for themselves which expression they think they belong to. If the participants cannot assign themselves to either one or the other, the addition of a third section of a petal is possible. Hereby, the participants are informed that the presentation of their own Power Flower at the final plenary discussion is voluntary.

During the plenary discussion the assessment of the own positioning will be discussed. The importance of knowing one's own position in order to deal with power structures should become evident. The differences between individuals should also be discussed, which in the best case should lead to empathy for other life situations. Here it is important to avoid feelings of guilt as well as feelings of powerlessness. Rather, the aim of the method is to consider together how power structures could be questioned in order to achieve a more solidary society.

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?

The self-assignment of participants to different culturally and ethnically constructed social groups could lead to the reproduction of culturalising and ethicising categories. As already described above, the social mechanisms of the construction and hierarchisation of social categories must be reflected.

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

It should also be debated how it might be possible to transform categories or power relations (e.g. from a marginalised position). At the same time, it can be argued that power can also be positive if it leads to a responsible shaping of society that enables participation, empowerment and power sharing (for example by ensuring fundamental and human rights).

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

The worksheet, the underlying categories as well as a fundamental understanding of social power structures must be presented in a comprehensible way in advance. Individual technical terms could be explained and discussed in several languages by participants with the help of translation programs.

Furthermore, the participants should be given the opportunity to prepare the discussion in terms of language. This can be done individually or in language-specific groups. The topic can be thought through in advance in their first language and then prepared for the joint discussion in the language shared by all participants. Based on the preparatory explanations, relevant terms (e.g. from sociology) can be explained on cards in several languages and used during the discussion.

How to use this method in a participatory way?

Especially when describing, explaining and discussing the complex social contexts, it is important to find a precise and differentiated language.

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

The method can certainly also be applied in higher grades at school to generate an awareness of social structures among the students. Here the categories and power relations must be very thoroughly selected and explained. In addition, it must be taken into account that many students may be personally affected and that due to their young age, they must be introduced to the subject matter with care. It is crucial to ensure that the students are empowered and strengthened.

Examples/possible topics

The method is suitable for reflecting on social power relations, social categories, forms of discrimination and strategies for overcoming discrimination.

d) Further information

Nürnberger Menschenrechtszentrum (2010) „Diskriminierung trifft uns alle!“ Power Flower. Available at: <http://www.diskriminierung.menschenrechte.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/powerflower.pdf> [29.02.20].



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>