

Lesson Sequences

“Identity” within the theme “Religion and Diversity”

BACKGROUND

Considering the curriculum in the Swedish context it is also possible to draw a lot of substance to “Identity”. In that, it says for example that pupils should be able to give examples of how identity is shaped and connected in relation to religion and conceptions of life. Developed analysis of religion related to ethnicity, gender, sexuality and socio-economic background is also part of the qualities of knowledge (Skolverket, 2011).

GOALS TO ACHIEVE

There’s a thought of progression within the three (3) lessons that will be presented. I start with concrete, relatable things that are close to the pupil’s everyday life. From there, it is possible to increase the level of abstraction, see order that follows:

In *the first lesson*, the pupils are encouraged to reflect upon “Identity” through the picture given by media in general and after that move more deeply into what “Identity” means to them personally. *The second lesson* contains the look upon “Identity” through the eyes of others than themselves. The purpose is therefore to make the pupils identify themselves with these people to increase tolerance. *The third lesson* attempts to capture the previous experiences into what “Identity” and “Identities” may mean in the whole context of society. This lesson is aimed to increase the pupil’s knowledge of what it means to be an ethnic or religious minority and majority within a community / town / country.

Through all this, the criterions within the curriculum are put into practice. Furthermore, the pupils are trained to collaborate, listen to others and with many perspectives in mind hopefully see the complexity within society. That may lead to a less judging attitude and more respectful manner, which is a part of the values of the Swedish school and a rich quality in a multi cultural society.

THE PUPILS

This lesson sequence example is made to suit pupils in their first year in upper secondary grade (app. ages 15-16). Regarding in what extent the class is motivated or not, modifications may be necessary.

1st Lesson: "My Identity"

60 MINUTES

CONTENT

- Presentation of today's work (the disposition as mentioned in this list)
- Part 1: Analysis of music video
- *BREAK* (5 min)
- Part 2: Play the game "My Identity" group wise

PART 1 *Here the pupils are introduced to "Identity". Start off by asking the class if they have experienced any pressure of how to be, look, act etc. The pupils can talk two by two and the teacher walk around in the classroom – this may be helping students who fear to speak up in class. Then watch the music video of Colbie Caillat – "Try" together. Let same groups talk again if they recognize this image or not and discuss how media may affect how people feel about themselves. Discuss the content collectively, so that the pupils can hear different approaches.*

PART 2 *This part is about to encourage the pupils to reflect more upon themselves and their own identity. Make pair of groups in the class (not larger than 3-4 pupils each). They are about to talk to their friends about what contributes to their own identity. The tool is a game pad, handed out by the teacher. For instructions, see next page →*

Finish

In the end of the lesson the teacher may summarize the groups discussions collectively. The purpose is to show different approaches to "identity" as it varies from person to person and there is no "true" answer to look for. Of course, as this is a personal matter, no one should be *forced* to tell too private things. It is important to issue that all discussions takes place with respect for on another.

Level of difficulty

The game pad task may seem to be easy. It can be used in class with pupils of younger age, but the model can be used also for older pupils. It is beneficial to use it in upper secondary school because the pupils have reached a more developed cognition and mind-sets. The responds may then be more advanced and articulated.

EQUIPMENT

A **game pad** and **dice** per each group.

INSTRUCTIONS

First, make pair or groups of pupils (app. 2-4) and sit together with your game pad.

1. One of you starts off by throwing dice.
2. The number is the subject related to your identity. Try to answer the question:
Why/why not is it a part of your identity? Give as many examples as you can!
3. Next person throws dice and talk from above.
4. Continue at least three rounds in the group.
/.../
5. Afterwards, reflect upon:
 - a. Which aspect is *most important* to you? Why? Discuss together.
 - b. Which aspect is *least – or not at all important*, according to you? Why?
 - c. Discuss each of the aspects separately. In *what situations* do you believe this aspect is *more or less* important to you? To other people?
 - d. Discuss what relation “Religion” has to do with the other aspects.

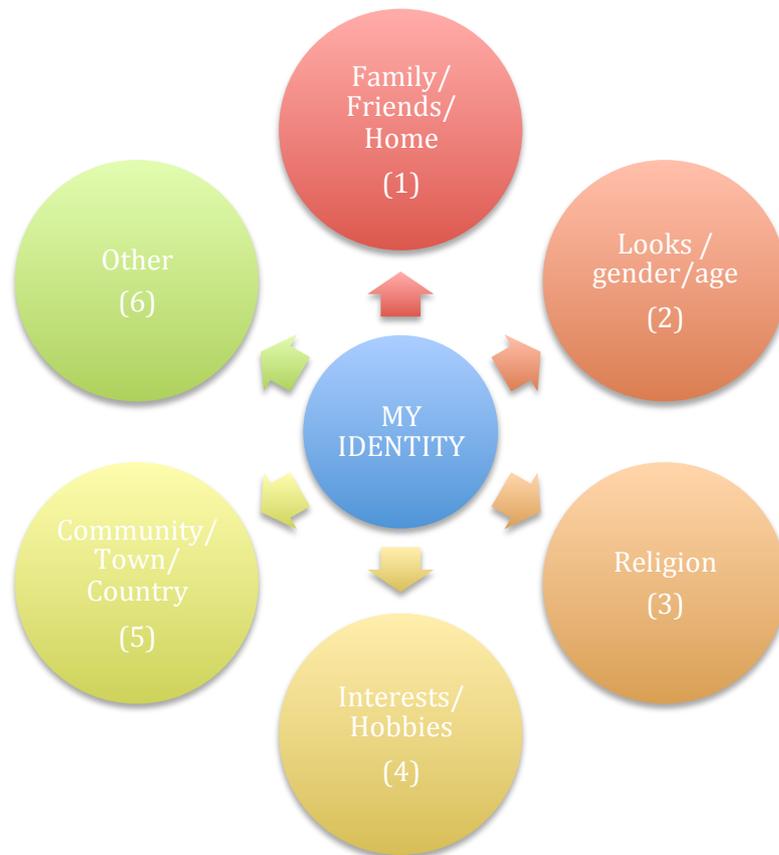


Fig. 1: GAME PAD, containing some of the many aspects of one's identity. Throw dice and speak up!

2nd Lesson: “The Story Tells”

60 MINUTES

CONTENT

- Presentation of today’s work and optional novels
- Split the class in groups, and let them read one of two to four novels presented, each
- The pupils in the group talk to a friend and discuss their same texts from the questions about “identity” that follows
- The pupils are paired to a friend who read the other novel and tells him/her what the meaning of “identity” was in the text and what role “religion” played

CHOOSING TEXT EXAMPLES

The pupils may contribute democratically if they can vote for two of many presented novels. An easy digital tool for this is *Mentimeter* (see mentimeter.com), which makes it easy to vote through use of 1:1 computers, tablet or smartphone. Through *Mentimeter* the result is shown directly at the teacher’s computer or wall. Advantageously, to reach a rich multi cultural dimension, the selectable pieces of text may represent different cultural and religious traditions. Examples are:

- Khaled Hosseini - “The Kite Runner” (2003), (Islam)
- Amulya Malladi – “The Mango Season” (2004), (Hinduism)
- Rebecca Goldstein – “Mazel” (2002), (Judaism)
- James Baldwin – “Go Tell the Mountain” (2000), (Christianity)
(Inspiration from the website <http://religiousworldsnyc.org/>)

ADAPTION

An other option is to cooperate with an other subject – language (in the Swedish context the Swedish language). By this, you and your class will get more time for reading – maybe a whole book? A good example to read and discuss together is. Added may be, that if the class not is motivated to read, for example “The Kite Runner” is also available as a movie.

A METHOD THAT CREATES IDENTIFICATION

There is a pedagogical idea behind reading a text about someone – in best case through a character in a novel speaking through “I” and “me”. In Sweden it is called “the IE-method” – “Identification creates Empathy”. Identification raises empathy and understanding, which are qualities of good value when meeting other people and may inspire to a peaceful thinking and behaviour.

3rd Lesson: “Identity within Society”

80 MINUTES

CONTENT

- Presentation of today’s work
- Part 1
- *BREAK* (10 min)
- Part 2

PART 1 *We start off with a concrete exercise about creating identity as a group. The background that is given is the one of the history of the Jews, more specifically the situation around 586 BC when the Jews were in Babylonian captivity. At that time the Jewish tried to capture their culture by writing it down. **Similarly, the hypothetical quest for the pupils is to think of one symbol, a ceremony and one song that characterizes their own class at the school. It must be something everyone can agree upon!***

After that, they can sing the song if they like and tell what it feels like to do that together. In case of non-motivation, the teacher may play the national anthem and ask at what times that is important. An other option is to show a video of a football team singing it on a football ground. Questions about how people behave, feel etc. are raised.

PART 2 *Academically theoretical approaches to “Identity”, which brings conceptions into further abstract understanding. Example of comparisons:*

- Compare to the Human Rights (<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>)
- Compare to Durkheim’s theoretical perspective of collective consciousness, meaning and social cohesion, (see for example <http://sociology.about.com/od/Profiles/p/Emile-Durkheim.htm>)
- Compare to meaningful, social cohesion, manageability etc. (see Aaron Antonovsky, *Unravelling The Mystery of Health. How People Manage Stress and Stay Well*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987)

Finish

The teacher finishes today’s lesson by letting the pupils discuss conflict dynamics in small groups: “When is it beneficial with a common identity and when it is limiting people to be who they would like to be?”