



Stimulus material – general introduction



Project Coordinator:
Prof. Dr. Dirk Lange
Project Management:

Dr. Eva Kalny

eva.kalny@idd.uni-hannover.de

Leibniz Universität Hannover, Institut für Didaktik der
Demokratie

Callinstraße 20, 30167 Hannover, Germany





The platform offers you so-called “stimulus material” for the implementation of Reflect-Labs in seminars and other courses given by lecturers of social sciences at universities. It aims above all to support lecturers who teach and educate future teachers of civic education.

The three topics presented on the platform (Crisis of the EU, Right Wing Movements, Migration and Refugees) were chosen because of their strong current impact on European societies. It is obvious that they will be outdated soon or are of minor importance in other contexts and societies. We therefore also explain how to create or choose your own stimulus material. With this input, lecturers will be able to create stimulus materials on their own.

a) Examples of Stimulus material on three selected topics

The strategy of the Reflect Lab is based on the inquiry-based learning approach. This means that the students in Reflect-Labs are self-responsible and apply investigation methods of social science to investigate relevant aspects of pressing social and political discussions. The goal is to consolidate a didactically innovative, self-supporting seminar structure. Thus, the Reflect Labs constitute a counterweight to the often-criticized reduction of university teaching to pure knowledge transfer.

The following material should be an impetus for exactly these goals. It serves as an incentive to carry out a Reflect Lab and gives students suggestions and input for reflection on socio-politically controversial topics. The students use the material as an inspiration at the beginning of the process. During the Reflect Lab, they deal more closely with selected aspects of the topic and reflect on the questions they would like to research further. The material on the platform therefore is not a finished collection of materials, nor can it claim to be scientific. Rather, it helps to provoke the first associations by the students and simplifies an approach to a topic. Stimulus material can be a comic, but also a shorter article or newspaper report. These are just some examples.

Some of the materials on the platform are subjective, provocative and controversial; others are more factual and differentiated. Students are not supposed to follow the arguments and opinions of the stimulus materials. On the contrary, an essential part of their exercise is to discuss these opinions and produce counter arguments and/or additional perspectives. Nevertheless, these materials can serve as a useful introduction to a topic.

For the implementation of an entire Reflect Lab, the students have access to the infrastructure of their university as well as the Method / Research Guide (Output 3) and Project Platform (Output 5) developed by the consortium. More details can be found in the corresponding materials.

For the successful implementation of a Reflect Lab, the lecturers can also count on the webinars and a description of the portfolio method and group work in the corresponding manual (Output 2)



b) How to create stimulus material for a Reflect Lab

In order to generate useful stimulus material for the implementation of a Reflect Lab, some principles should be considered:

According to Haarmann and Lange, the students should independently be able to analyse social realities and social issues in the work process of the political laboratory with regard to central problems and questions (cf. Haarmann/Lange 2013, p. 77)

The stimulus material will be implemented in Phase 1 of a Reflect Lab.



Illustration taken and translated from Haarmann/Lange (2013): Das Politik-Labor: Forschend Lernen in der politischen Bildung. In: Juchler, Ingo (Hrsg.): Projekte in der politischen Bildung. Schriftenreihe Bd. 1363. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, S. 79.

One or more stimuli are needed in order to draw attention to the topic of a Reflect Lab, which must not inadmissibly narrow down the possible questions derived from it. Therefore, a certain openness in the choice of the stimulus material has to be considered. Furthermore, the stimulus materials should not give just one opinion, but several perspectives, since the students should work on the questions derived from the materials according to their own interest and their intersubjective view (cf. Lange/Haarmann 2013, p. 77, 78).

In order to enable students to relate the questions to their own reality, you should take care that the stimulus material and the chosen topic of the Reflect Lab are related to the students' environment.

Therefore, the following demands must be met when designing stimulus materials:

The materials

- 1. should allow many questions**
- 2. should allow and provoke different perspectives and opinions**
- 3. should relate to the living environment of the students.**

Sources:

Das Politik-Labor: Forschend Lernen in der politischen Bildung. In: Juchler, Ingo (Ed.) 2014: Projekte in der politischen Bildung. Schriftenreihe Bd. 1363. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, S. 79.



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