

## Lesson 3

### Looking forward: three choices that shape our future lives

#### Liberty consists in the ability to choose – or not to choose

This matrix sums up the information a teacher needs to plan and deliver the lesson.

Competence training refers directly to EDC/HRE.

The learning objective indicates what students know and understand.

The student task(s), together with the method, form the core element of the learning process.

The materials checklist supports lesson preparation.

The time budget gives a rough guideline for the teacher's time management.

Competence training	Making decisions, setting priorities.	
Learning objective	Human rights give us options how to shape our future lives – we decide whether to take them.	
Student tasks	The students reflect on key choices that affect their future lives.	
Materials and resources	☞ Student handout 1.2. Flipchart, markers.	
Method	Individual work with a handout. Plenary discussion.	
Time budget	1. Introduction to the topic and the task.	10 min
	2. The students reflect on key choices.	10 min
	3. Presentation and reflection.	20 min

#### Information box

“Who will my partner be?” – “Do we want to have children?” – “Which job will I choose?”

In this lesson, the students will address these choices. In doing so, they switch their perspectives from the past to the future. In the lesson before, they looked back, dealing with the question of what choices were made (and by whom) that decisively affected their lives and shaped their identities during their childhood and adolescence. In this lesson they are going to look into the future. They will be making the key choices – on partnership, family and their profession – that probably have the strongest impact on their identities.

The students will become aware of the gender issue involved: the traditional role of women was to choose partnership and family – without a profession, while men focused on their role as income earners (profession) and partnership, with a reduced responsibility for family life. Today, young women exercise their right to education much more extensively, with the intention of choosing their profession. So while women attempt to find a way to balance all three options – profession, partnership, and family – many, but not all, men continue to adhere to their traditional understanding of their role.

## Lesson description

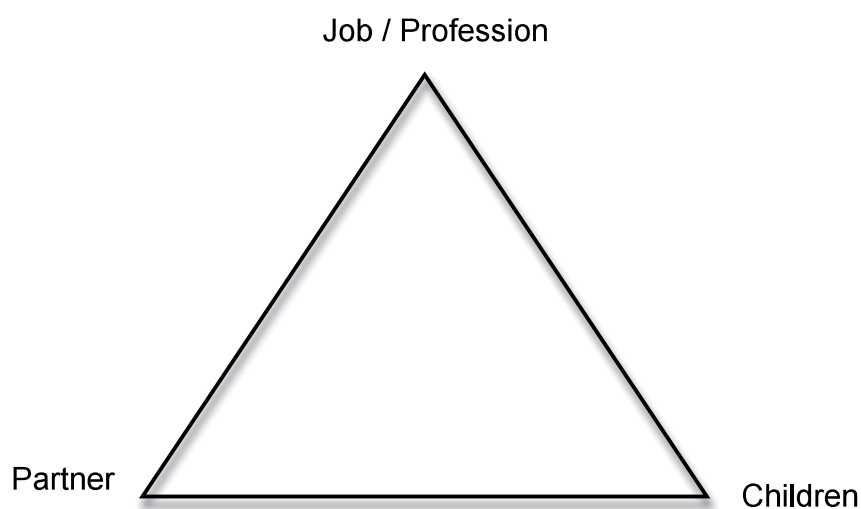
### 1. Introduction to the topic and the task

#### The teacher gets the students involved (inductive approach)

The teacher begins the lesson by asking a question that every student can answer, and that comes directly to the point: why do you attend school at upper secondary level?

The students, male and female alike, will surely answer that they wish to choose a profession. They also want to have access to advanced levels of study and training, such as university study.

The teacher lets several students take the floor, until a clear picture emerges. Then he/she sums up the students' responses by drawing the diagram on *≈* student handout 1.2 onto the blackboard or flipchart and adding the first choice – job.



The teacher explains that this is one choice that the students have just given top priority to, and it is clear how important it is for their identities. In doing so, they are exercising human rights – the liberty to make choices in general, and the liberty to choose a profession. Students may rightly point out that this liberty is restricted by the limited access to certain jobs, by unemployment or strong competition for example. This topic need not be followed up here, as it will be addressed in the following lesson.

The teacher addresses the other key choices: do I want to live with a partner, and if so, who will my partner be? (Or have I made that choice already?) And do I, or do we want to have children? The teacher adds the terms “Partner” and “Children” to the diagram, so that it resembles *≈* student handout 1.2.

The teacher explains that we all have to answer these questions one way or the other. We may choose to combine all three options, or to combine only two and leave one out. We will be leading completely different lives, depending on the choices we make or don't make. We exercise human rights, but we also carry responsibility for our lives, and the lives of others (our partners, our children).

#### The teacher introduces the task

The teacher distributes *≈* student handout 1.2. He/she makes the students aware of the human rights that grant the key options of choosing a job, a life with a partner, and having children (*≈* student handout 1.2, part 1). The students' task is to think about their choices, and to record their decision in the matrix in part 2 of the handout.

If they wish, they can compare their choices with the choices their parents made. This additional information will not be shared in class. The information on their choices will remain anonymous.

## 2. The students reflect on their key choices

The students work by themselves in silence. The teacher does not look at any handout, as discretion is important when such delicate matters are addressed.

The teacher prepares the follow-up phase. He/she attaches a flipchart to the blackboard or the wall. Ideally the students should be protected from view when writing on it. The flipchart shows a modified version of the matrix on *≈* student handout 1.2.

The text can be reduced to letters, as the students know the matrix. The following legend is sufficient:

**J**ob – **P**artnership – **C**hildren

Options for our futures		Women	Men
All three	P + C + J		
Two out of three	P + C		
	P + J		
	J + C		
One out of three	P		
	J		
	C		

The teacher leaves the marker for the students.

## 3. Presentation and reflection

### The students present their choices

The teacher explains how the students may add their choice discretely. In turn, each student comes to the flipchart and marks his/her choice by a simple “one” symbol (1).

Female and male students use separate columns.

The students come forward to the flipchart in turn and mark their choices. When they have finished, two students count up the marks per section and add the figures.

### The students comment on and discuss the results

The result can hardly be anticipated. It is interesting to see how many young men and women intend to combine all three options, and how many are going for two, and which two.

“Partner+Job”: The traditional male model “breadwinner+housewife”. The students should become aware of the implications if both partners make this choice – this is the “dink” model (double income, no kids).

“Job+Children”: An unlikely choice, as it means single parenthood, but as the students will know, a significant number of families have one parent – not as a matter of choice, but through divorce or death.

“Partner+Children”: The traditional female model if it lasts for a lifetime. Many young mothers, and to a lesser extent young fathers, accept this option for a while to care for their children when they are very small. It is understood that they will return to their jobs as soon as possible.

“Job+Partner+Children”: The students will know that this option is a challenge. Is there a difference in the choices made by each gender? Presumably more young women than men will choose this

option. If so, what are the reasons for this? The teacher should not press the students if they are unwilling to talk about the reasons for their choices. The teacher can point out, however, that this is an example of how individual choices may affect society as a whole: if many choose not to have children then the birth rate will fall. No moral pressure should be added, but the students should be made aware of the long-term effects that their individual choices will inevitably have (see extension below).

With these possible lines of thought in mind, the teacher awaits the results, and then responds – improvising, if necessary. Reflection beforehand, as outlined here, helps; and so does an evaluation of the lesson afterwards, to develop capacities and confidence in improvisation.

**Extension**

The problem of falling birth rates and ageing or shrinking populations besets many industrialised and developed countries around the world, including China, Germany and Italy. Serious problems for the economy and old age pension systems may arise. With statistical data, the students can investigate the situation in their country. They can analyse and judge solutions.