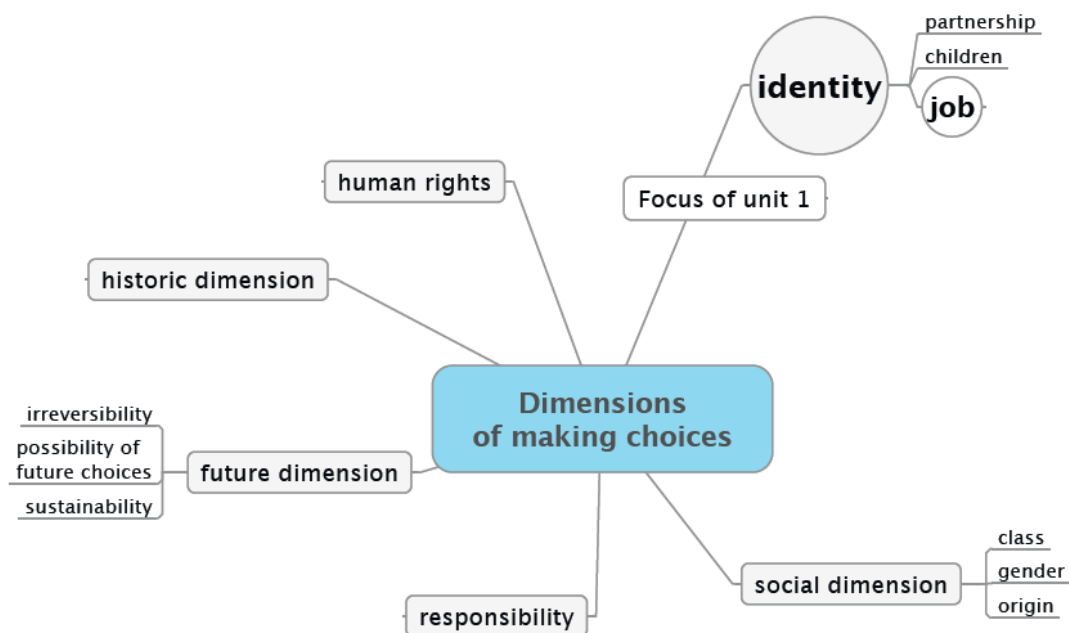


Unit 1.3 Background information for teachers

The constructivist concept of identity

Linked to the concept of identity, constructivism means that we shape our identities by the choices and decisions that we make. Constructivism emphasises the active role of the individual, and points to the element of learning involved. In life, we make mistakes, and so we also become aware of mistakes in the choices we made. We may be able to undo some choices (deconstruct them), and correct them, but some choices are irreversible. Time, above all things, can only be spent once in life. Constructivism links the dynamics of making choices to the result, our identity, which becomes static and stable to a certain extent.



This unit focuses on the active role we perform in shaping our own identities – and each other’s, in which we also have a passive role. Of course, identity development is far more complex, and depends on many other factors (variables) that define or limit our chances to shape our lives and identities. These include origin, class, gender, economic and cultural conditions, and the natural environment.

There are two reasons why this unit focuses on the constructivist dimension of shaping our identity by making choices. First, this approach links identity to human rights. Making choices is an act of liberty. Second, the students understand this approach best, as it corresponds to their experience and the questions they are asking themselves.

Not only the concept of identity is much more complex than it appears in this unit; the same applies to the concept of choices. The diagram above describes the didactic approach of this unit: the students explore the links between two complex concepts, but neither of the concepts in its entirety.