

## CLEAR Workshop with students from Norway and Germany

On Friday October 25, 2013, student teachers from the University of Hamburg and the Norwegian University for Science and technology (NTNU) met for a whole day workshop in Trondheim/Norway. The workshop was the final event and highlight of a cooperation between the students within the framework of CLEAR (Concept Learning for Empowerment through Analysis and Reflection) which had been going on for two months. Before their meeting in Trondheim, the students had had worked separately at the two universities and together on the CLEAR internet platform.

According to the CLEAR methodology, the working process comprised the following steps:

- reflection on personal perspectives and understanding of the concepts;
- reflection on how this understanding is informed by contemporary contexts and historical references;
- exploration of existing definitions of the concepts in different fields;
- exploration of the historical development of the concept and its changing definitions;
- awareness of contexts in which the concepts are part of debate and power struggles.

The concepts that were chosen for this cooperation were *revolution*, *collaboration*, *gender*, *racism* and *Zionism*.

Although the students had never met in person before, the participatory learning methodology helped them to enter quickly in a lively discussion. In the first part of the workshop the students discussed their personal understandings of the concepts and relate them to different and shared cultural, socio-political and historical references. This discussion led to an awareness of the ways in which understandings of concepts like *racism* and *gender* are on the one hand influenced by socio-economical and political changes but on the other hand also are part of the self-awareness and agency of individuals and groups (e.g. in anti-racist struggles and feminism)

Later on, each concept was systematically placed within historical developments and different contexts (developing "Speaker Production Charts").

The group appeared to have a large degree on shared understandings and references related to the concepts under discussion. However, there was some issues where the participants either had very different first notions or appeared to struggle with reaching an analytical distance and rather seemed to be identified with positions within the debates about the concepts. It became obvious, that the differences in understanding of concepts could relate to different meanings the concept have in their respective mother tongue and the historical experiences related to the meaning of the concept. The German understanding of the concept "collaboration" for example came from a historical context and had negative connotations, while the Norwegian participants described and understood the concept in a contemporary context and in positive terms. This observation led to an interesting discussion in the group, and showed the inspiring outcomes that CLEAR can contribute with.

Throughout the whole workshop, the on-going discussions were related to a didactic perspective, namely the question "how do we organize fruitful and reflexive learning processes related to concept understanding?" The workshop methodology in itself appeared to be "learning by doing" in this regard. In a last session of the workshop, the students designed teaching and learning units/modules focusing on the five concepts they had explored the whole day. This made the workshop relevant for the participants' class room practice.

The workshop evaluation showed that the student teachers appreciated the encounter and the intense testing of the CLEAR methodology.