

Hedtke, Reinhold

The socioeconomic curriculum. A contribution to transforming economics high school education

formal überarbeitete Version der Originalveröffentlichung in:

formally revised edition of the original source in:

Hantke, Harald [Hrsg.]; Lingen, Sophia von [Hrsg.]; Weber, Birgit [Hrsg.]: Nachhaltige Transformation der Wirtschaft. Wiesbaden : Springer VS 2025, 21 S.. - (Sozioökonomische Bildung und Wissenschaft; 11)



Bitte verwenden Sie in der Quellenangabe folgende URN oder DOI /

Please use the following URN or DOI for reference:

urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-336964

10.25656/01:33696

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-336964>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:33696>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Dieses Dokument steht unter folgender Creative Commons-Lizenz: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de> - Sie dürfen das Werk bzw. den Inhalt unter folgenden Bedingungen vervielfältigen, verbreiten und öffentlich zugänglich machen: Sie müssen den Namen des Autors/Rechteinhabers in der von ihm festgelegten Weise nennen. Dieses Werk bzw. dieser Inhalt darf nicht für kommerzielle Zwecke verwendet werden und es darf nicht bearbeitet, abgewandelt oder in anderer Weise verändert werden.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use

This document is published under following Creative Commons-License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.en> - You may copy, distribute and transmit, adapt or exhibit the work in the public as long as you attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor. You are not allowed to make commercial use of the work or its contents. You are not allowed to alter, transform, or change this work in any other way.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.



Kontakt / Contact:

peDOCS
DIPF | Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation
Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung
E-Mail: pedocs@dipf.de
Internet: www.pedocs.de

Mitglied der


Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

The Socioeconomic Curriculum – A Contribution to Transforming Economics High School Education

Reinhold Hedtke

This text is a preprint of a chapter in:

Hantke, von Lingen, Weber (eds.), Nachhaltige Transformation der Wirtschaft (working title). Wiesbaden 2025: Springer VS (forthcoming).

Reinhold Hedtke, Dr., Professor emeritus of Economic Sociology and Social Science Education at the Faculty of Sociology of Bielefeld University.

reinhold.hedtke@uni-bielefeld.de

1. Introduction

For a number of years, there has been a rethinking of economic education at universities and schools in a variety of ways. Numerous initiatives offer innovative educational concepts, course programmes, textbooks and learning materials. They are committed to upholding academic principles such as real-world relevance, multidisciplinary, pluralism in economic discourse, and the necessity of value-oriented approaches. Prominent exemplars of this movement include *Rethinking Economics*, the *Institute for New Economic Thinking*, *Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik* (Plural Economics Network), and the *CORE project*. Additionally, notable contributions have been made by the Dutch *Economy Studies*, whose book and website have received input from numerous academics (Muijnck & Tieleman, 2022), as well as the international *Regenerative Economics Syllabus* initiative (Brandsberg-Engelmann et al., 2024).

This article outlines the principal characteristics of the *Socioeconomic Curriculum* (Das Sozioökonomische Curriculum), which was developed by Reinhold Hedtke (2018) and forms part of this transformative movement in the field of economic education. For brevity, we will refer to it hereinafter as ‘SEC’. The curriculum is aligned with the lower secondary level of the German education system and provides a comprehensive curricular foundation for socioeconomic education. The concept offers a concrete illustration of how economic education can be innovatively rethought and practically implemented in schools. Because the SEC designs economic education in a problem-oriented and integrative way, and because it conceptually links society, economy and politics, the SEC is well suited for approaches to education in a transformative context. This is also supported by its transformative notion of education.

The SEC is based on the subject philosophy of social science-oriented, multidisciplinary *socioeconomic* education, which has a decades-long tradition in Germany (cf. Fischer & Zurstrassen 2014; Engartner 2020). In 2010, this was challenged by a concept of monodisciplinary *economics* education (Retzmann et al., 2010; Seeber et al., 2012). Its core demand was to separate economic science knowledge from

multidisciplinary social science school subjects and transfer it to a separate, disciplinary school subject called economics. A controversy over the disciplinary concept of economics education developed and continues to this day. The traditions of socioeconomic education and economics education differ mainly in terms of criteria such as general educational goals, subject area, related science(s), worldviews, paradigmaticity and plurality, notions of ‘economic’ action and knowledge relevant to economic education.

The Socioeconomic Curriculum pertains to the subdomain of ‘the economy in society’ anchored in the social science domain, rather than being confined to a specific disciplinary school subject. As a *core* curriculum, it encompasses the knowledge and skills that all learners are expected to acquire.

This article is limited to provide a concise overview in English of several key features of the Socioeconomic Curriculum, explaining and illustrating them. This text represents the initial attempt to present the fundamental tenets of the SEC to a non-German-speaking audience, with the objective of facilitating international discourse and subject-matter didactic networking. A first access to the criticism of the concept of socioeconomic education on which the SEC is based can be found in itdb (2023).

The curriculum is presented below in three sections, the content of which is largely based on two books of Hedtke (2018, 2023b). Firstly, the core principles of the SEC are elucidated, with particular emphasis on its conceptual framework and the multifaceted dimensions of the subject area ‘economy’ (2). Subsequently, select key elements are presented as illustrative examples, including its curricular core elements, content areas, and competences (3). Finally, the text utilises problem-oriented lesson planning and a planning grid to demonstrate the practical application of the SEC. This is followed by some concluding considerations (5).

The article considers transformation in socio-economic education from a variety of perspectives. It is based on an understanding of education as a personal transformative process (‘Bildung’), it interprets the SEC as a conceptual approach to transforming conventional economics education, and it sees SEC’s proposals and tools as an attempt to enable a substantive, thematic and cultural transformation of economic teaching and learning without relying on disrupting established structures.

2. Foundations of the Socioeconomic Curriculum

This section first considers the question of the educational theory on which socioeconomic education is based and the didactic principles of the Socioeconomic Curriculum (2.1). The second section addresses the question how to define the subject area ‘the economy’ as a socioeconomic educational task and what distinguishes it from the subject area ‘economics’ (2.2).

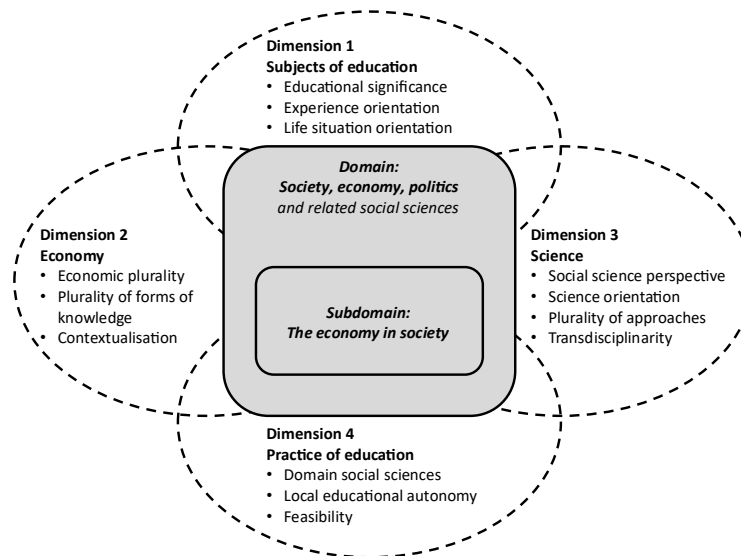
2.1. Conceptual lines of reasoning

Domain-specific educational concepts build on fundamental statements regarding four dimensions of teaching and learning: (1) subjects of education, (2) the economy

as subject area, (3) reference to science(s) and (4) practice(s) of teaching and learning or education (see Figure 2.1.1). It is the task of each subject didactics to provide content for the four dimensions and to differentiate that content with respect to the specific domain in question. The core elements and principles of the concept of socioeconomic education and of the Socioeconomic Curriculum can be assigned to the four dimensions, although not always exclusively. Subject orientation with educational significance ('Bildungsrelevanz'), experience and life situation orientation fall within the dimension 'subjects of education'. The SEC assigns three key elements to this dimension: challenges, experiential spaces and normative guiding principles (as part of the learners' self-relations).

Problem orientation, plurality and contextualisation are associated with the dimension 'domain'. In the SEC, this primarily involves the building blocks pluralistic approaches in economic practices, normative guiding principles (as part of the economic reality) and examples. Social science perspective, science orientation (as a general didactic principle) and scientific plurality relate to the dimension 'science', in the SEC it corresponds to the features social science concepts and pluralistic approaches.

Fig. 2.1.1 Conceptual lines of reasoning



Source: Author; cf. Hedtke 2018, p. 96.

Finally, content areas, competences, social science concepts, normative guiding ideas, methods and the autonomy of local actors are all part of the dimension

‘practice of education’. The structural design of the SEC is informed by the multi-disciplinary culture of school subjects in the social science domain of school education. It is therefore based on the principle of practical applicability in schools and teaching.

There is not enough space here to explain the conceptual reasoning of socioeconomic education for all four dimensions in more detail (see Hedtke, 2018, pp. 95–104, 2023b, pp. 242–358). A few remarks will have to suffice; the focus will be on *Bildung*, while other principles will be addressed with a few words.

Bildung

The SEC is legitimised first and foremost by its distinctive contribution to *Bildung*, to the personal development and maturity of young people with reference to the domain ‘the economy in society’ (dimension 1). From the perspective of socioeconomic didactics, a shift from an orthodox to a pluralistic *economics* education is inadequate. It would merely substitute a deficient *scientistic* approach for a superior one. In contrast to the construction of education from the perspective of a scientific discipline, the approach of the SEC places the individual, his or her personal education, socioeconomic life, thinking, and actions at the centre. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by education in the sense of *Bildung* (Hedtke, 2023b, pp. 122–186)

The emphasis of socioeconomic education is on the processes of personal education (*Bildung*) of students, which they are encouraged to shape autonomously. Consequently, compulsory knowledge and skills must satisfy the criterion of *educational relevance* (*Bildungsrelevanz*), defined as the capacity to facilitate the growth of learners’ personal world, self, and social (other) relations. This also encompasses the promotion of children’s and young people’s capacity to orientate themselves within their everyday socioeconomic environments and act in a pragmatic manner, as well as fostering critical and self-critical reflection with respect to these contexts.

Socioeconomic didactics takes up the criticism of the ‘learnification of education’ put forth by Gert Biesta and his distinction between the three educational functions of qualification, socialisation and subjectification (Biesta, 2020, pp. 92–93; Biesta, 2010, p. 5). Socioeconomic education is characterised by the fact that it focuses on subjectification – or individuation – and thus on *Bildung* as a process of “promotion of freedom” (Biesta, 2020, p. 94). Subjectification is “about being *a* self, being a subject of your own life”, “not as the object of what other people want from me.” (Biesta, 2020, pp. 93–94).

Especially in the domain of economic education, however, there are numerous programmes that (try to) turn subjects into objects, for example in much of entrepreneurship education, financial education and consumer education. At the same time, this freedom to shape one’s own world, self and other relations is not limitless, but contextualised. As Biesta (2020, p. 96) notes, it is “a complex network through which we act, [...] that sustains and nurtures us”.

The Socioeconomic Curriculum is based on the concept of education as a transformative process, which is primarily represented by Winfried Marotzki, Arnd-

Michael Nohl and Hans-Christoph Koller transformation (Koller et al., 2007; Koller, 2020; Marotzki, 1990; Neubauer & Lehmann, 2017; Nohl, 2017). Education, as the English equivalent of the German *Bildung*, refers to transformative processes of world, self and other relations that fulfil two criteria: they lead to more reflexivity of the subjects and increase the complexity of their three relations (Koller, 2020, p. 647). „*Bildung* and transformative learning, therefore, are concerned with the *human subject's being in the world*. They must formally be distinguished from learning, which relates to dealing with and appropriating *fragments* of the world—so called subject-matters and skills.“ (Nohl, 2017, p. 100). The three personal relations provide the *framework* for concrete learning, which can be defined as the process of identifying appropriate responses to problems that emerge *within given* personal contexts, orientation schemes, patterns of perception and interpretation (Hedtke, 2018, p. 106). Conversely, education as *Bildung* is a process that *changes* (parts of) this framework.

The impetus for educational processes is provided by irritations, interruptions, and often also confrontation with the reality and encounter with the other as *experience of the foreign* (Bernhard Waldenfels). “We can understand situations in which people are confronted with problems for which the established figures of their world- and self-reference prove inadequate as an occasion, a catalyst, or a calling-out of *Bildung* processes” (Koller, 2020, p. 640).

The Socioeconomic Curriculum adapts this concept of *Bildung* in two ways. Firstly, children and young people build and develop their personal world, self, and other relations. In this phase of life, education therefore primarily involves construction processes, although these are also mixed with transformation. In particular, young people develop philosophies pertaining to the socioeconomic domain, including their philosophies of work, consumption, prosperity, sociality, nature and economics (cf. Hedtke, 2023b, pp. 340–344). Empirical evidence demonstrates that domain-related concretisations of self, world and other relations are significantly irritated by experience of crisis and crises. For example, the status passage into employment or climate anxiety are two such experiences (Hedtke, 2023b, pp. 71–105; Hickman et al., 2021).

Secondly, the socioeconomic concept of *Bildung* acknowledges the fluid boundaries between education and learning. Socioeconomic didactics differentiates between education and learning by characterising educational processes as tending to be longer-term, more inclusive, more complex, deeper and more far-reaching than learning processes (Hedtke, 2023b, pp. 65–66). This is certainly not a dichotomous distinction. The experiential realm of school learning leads to “an increase in a pool of skills integrated into routine forms”, while the experiential realm of education is aimed more at “constellations of biographically consequential school learning” (Combe & Gebhard, 2012, p. 60; own translation).

Principles

Contextualisation (dimension 2). In a weaker notion, the principle of contextuality refers to the comprehension of economic phenomena and problems as embedded in

social, historical, and spatial contexts (see Hedtke, 2018, pp. 185–186). In a stronger interpretation, contextuality denotes that the economy is constituted and continuously reproduced in interaction with these contexts. The strong version regards culture and politics (power) as inherent elements of the functioning of the economy itself. For example, exchange processes can be considered political processes because they are shaped by power, or markets can be viewed as institutions that produce different social norms (Bowles, 2004, p. 265). Consequently, embeddedness and its myriad manifestations are an *intrinsic and defining* characteristic of the economic domain and the subject matter of socioeconomic education. Contextualisation represents a necessary perspective for an adequate understanding, explanation, thinking and acting with regard to the economy (Engartner, 2020). The dimension of *historicity* as a form of contextualisation is expressed, for example, in the change and path dependency of socioeconomic phenomena, policies and practices (Hodgson, 2002).

Social science perspective (‘Sozialwissenschaftlichkeit’, dimension 3; Hedtke, 2018, p. 180). In the context of subject didactic justification and construction, the social science perspective signifies that socioeconomic didactics identifies the knowledge and skills pertinent to education from a range of social sciences, including economics, sociology, political science, economic anthropology and social psychology (for further details, see section 2.2). In the construction of the curriculum and planning of lesson series, this implies that the initial focus should be on the approaches and bodies of knowledge that are more or less common to the selected social sciences (transdisciplinary social science knowledge and skills; Hedtke, 2023a). The multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinarity of the social sciences thus define the self-image of socio-economic education. It is evident that this necessarily encompasses the *disciplinarity* of individual social sciences and the differences between them. It is obvious that the modes of thought, theories and concepts are situated within social and historical contexts (Herzog, 2013, p. 159; *contextualisation of science*).

Experience and life situation orientation (cf. Hedtke, 2018, pp. 50–52). Socioeconomic didactics posits that experience and life-world orientation should be a structural principle of subject didactics (dimension 1; see also Graupe, 2019). It is critical of teaching methods that merely instrumentalise learners’ experiences and situations for the sole purpose of motivating them to learn the subject matter. In contrast, it integrates subject-oriented and experience-oriented approaches, facilitates the exploration of learners’ typical experiences, and encourages them to reflect on these experiences. The term ‘experience’ denotes recollections that an individual subsequently accentuates, reflects upon, categorises and correlates with other experiences, thereby conferring meaning upon them. The individuals themselves create and categorise their experiences, employing terminology drawn from everyday social discourse, encompassing social common sense and communicated collective experiences. This supports the view that socioeconomic education should view its subject area as the economy *in society*.

Furthermore, it considers the role of experiential spaces, defined as social spaces where individuals repeatedly engage in and anticipate similar experiences, which they subsequently categorise as representative of the field. Socioeconomic examples include private households, markets and training companies. The question of which experiences and experiential spaces young people are familiar with is an empirical one that can be answered by research in the social sciences.

Additionally, experiences are often associated with specific situations, which are frequently referred to as ‘life situations’ within the field of subject matter didactics (Fischer et al., 2019; Oeftering et al., 2019). A life situation can be defined as a distinguishable configuration of circumstances that is perceived as typical and tends to persist or recur. It comprises a number of key elements, including actors (both individuals and organisations), expectations, options and courses of action, perceptions and patterns of justification, objects and framework conditions. A variety of institutions, including the household, market, hierarchy, habit, tradition, norm, and imitation, as well as organisational forms such as the state, companies, network, and associations, play a role in shaping life situations.

In the context of socioeconomic didactics, the term ‘life situations’ encompasses both the personal and the social, as well as the interactions and the contextual framework. Such definitions are based on individual and collective interpretations, as well as on processes of communication.

The aforementioned characteristics of situations are similarly applicable to the life situations of young people. These situations are inherently ambiguous and are shaped more by perspective than by objective reality. Moreover, they are often controversial and subject to change. In contexts beyond those that may be considered ‘natural’, actions are typically required to be justified. Additionally, a given situation may require the application of knowledge and skills that are contradictory. In conclusion, these are significant opportunities for reflection, learning and *Bildung*.

It is typically challenging to ascertain the specific requirements of a given situation. This is because it is often difficult to determine a clear relationship between a given situation and the ‘objectively appropriate’ knowledge and skills that should be transported into and applied in that situation. Politically inspired, often instrumentalist education programmes such as financial education often fail to take this into account. In contrast, socioeconomic education is distinguished by its focus on guiding young people to comprehend and interpret ‘typical’ situations, while also underscoring their social nuances and diversity, complexity and uncertainty. It enables them to evaluate and consider the suitability of knowledge and skills in a given context. Consequently, subject orientation necessitates that the perspectives and viewpoints of young people themselves are accorded central importance, that they are acknowledged and treated as experts on their own lives and life situations, their own objectives, challenges, pathways and modes of existence, and that they can articulate this if they so desire.

Plurality. The concept of plurality is inherent in the world (Horst, 2023). The subject didactic principle of plurality reflects this state of the world. It pertains to two distinct yet interrelated dimensions (see Figure 2.1.1). The first is the ‘domain’

dimension, which encompasses the plurality of economic practice and forms of knowledge. The second is the ‘science’ dimension, which refers to the plurality of perspectives, disciplines, and approaches (cf. Reardon, 2009). Socioeconomic didactics integrates this as the plurality of real-world and scientific forms of knowledge (Hedtke, 2023b, pp. 278–350)

In recent times, subject didactics has also been engaged in discourse surrounding representational pluralism; however, this is still predominantly conceptualised with contributions from natural science education (Flores-Camacho & Gallegos-Cázares, 2024; Paillusson & Booth, 2024). It is essential that this discussion is also considered within the context of a socioeconomic curriculum and socioeconomic didactics.

2.2. Multidimensional subject area ‘the economy’

In its most general formulation, socioeconomic subject-matter didactics recognises the *economy in society* as its genuine subject area; the short formula includes, of course, politics (for the following see ; Hedtke, 2018, pp. 245–247, 2023b, pp. 256–257). From a broader perspective, this also includes the mirrored perspective of *society in the economy*. This is because social structures and institutions, relationships and processes, norms and values, patterns of interpretation and thinking, forms of behaviour and routines are an integral part of the economy. They cannot be simply reduced to its framework conditions. Economic action is social action in the sense that it relates to the actions of others and is oriented towards them (Max Weber), belongs to the collective repertoire of types of action and behaviour (Alfred Schütz/Thomas Luckmann), reacts to the expectations of others (Niklas Luhmann) or justifies or legitimises itself vis-à-vis others (Luc Boltanski/Laurent Thévenot). Economic organisations such as firms, companies, corporations or global value chains are social, socially constituted entities.

Socioeconomic education is therefore social science education *applied* to the subject area of the economy (Hedtke, 2018, pp. 245–254). Socioeconomic learning and education, refer to and focus on this subject area – in subject-oriented and learner-centred approaches. The economy and economic activity in a society primarily contribute to ensuring the material reproduction of that society and its members in the form of production, consumption and distribution. Socioeconomic education therefore focuses on dealing with the specific realities of the economy, in short: the economic domain.

One of the core tenets of socioeconomic education is its scientific orientation. Consequently, it is imperative to examine how social science economic research and, more specifically, economics and business construct their subject area. These sciences employ a number of pivotal concepts of the economy. They offer a valuable opportunity to reflect on the attribution of ‘economy’, its diversity and change, and to challenge popular essentialist ideas that posit ‘the economy is...’.

Firstly, the subject area of economics can be defined as an ensemble of four interrelated areas that generate prosperity in a society: the market sector with private-sector companies, the state sector including public-sector companies, the private

household sector and the non-profit sector. Furthermore, unpaid work, particularly by women, is included and forms a basis of economic activity. Estimates suggest that it accounts for between a third and a half of all value-creating economic activity in OECD countries (Veerle, 2016, p. 72).

Second, the economy can be understood as the entire body of ‘economic matters’, i.e. everything that is usually referred to as ‘economic’ in a society. This includes, for example, “goods and prices, production and labour, trade (including foreign trade) and consumption, money, debt and property, development, growth and welfare” (Reiss, 2017, p. 583; own translation). This understanding of the economy is also subject to social and political change.

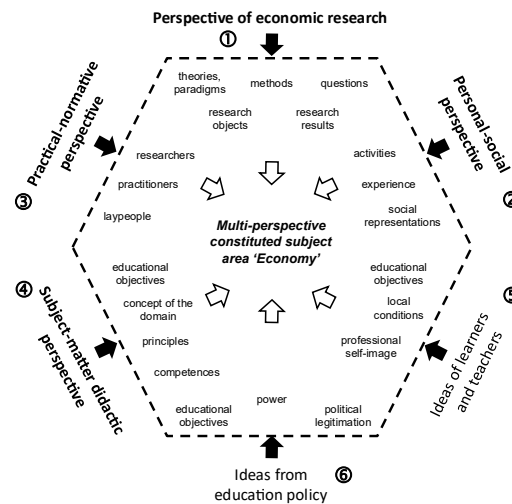
Third, a traditional and still relevant distinction can be made between the formal and the material concept of the economy. The material concept in the narrower sense focuses on the functions of supply or material reproduction (production and distribution) and the institutions in which a society organises them (e.g. Boulding, 1986, pp. 9–11). Economics is then a science of social processes of supply and provision (Nelson, 1997, pp. 159–161). This tradition goes back to Adam Smith.

The formal concept, on the other hand, concentrates on decisions based on the principle of economic efficiency. Here, the economy is understood as a principally unlimited space of individual rational choices under conditions of scarcity, and, therefore, opportunity costs. This conceptualisation marks the starting point of neoclassicism (Robbins, 1932, p. 16). Economics is then a science of individual choice in a world of scarcity.

This brief reflection on the subject area of socioeconomic education shows impressively that plurality is a scientific fact from the very beginning. It already affects elementary terms and concepts and does not only begin with lessons on economic policy controversies in higher grades. The principle of scientific orientation requires the application of the principle of plurality.

The following sections explain how socioeconomic didactics constitutes its educational object (Hedtke, 2018, pp. 248–254; and 2023b, pp. 256–273). The main focus is to show that it is a multidimensional process that integrates four main perspectives (see Figure 2.2.1): The perspective of economic research in social sciences (1), the personal and social perspective (2), the practical and normative perspective (3) and the subject-matter didactic perspective (4). In addition, concepts and beliefs of learners and teachers about education, teaching and learning (5) as well as educational policy goals and programmes (6) are included.

Fig. 2.2.1 The multidimensional subject area of “the economy”



Source: Author; cf. Hedtke 2018, p. 252.

If one follows the principle of scientific orientation (perspective 1), then the definition of the subject area of the economy results firstly from the self-understandings and the subjects of social science economic research and its disciplines (cf. Hedtke, 2023b, pp. 287–300). These include socioeconomics, political economy, economics, business administration, convention economics, economic, organisational, work and consumption sociology, economic philosophy, business ethics and economic history. As shown above, the views on the subject area are already plural and, in some cases, controversial. For this reason, socioeconomic didactics takes plurality and multidisciplinaryity into account conceptually, curricularly, and performatively, i.e. in the planning and practice of teaching and learning. It goes without saying that subject didactics must provide a clear, exemplary and age-appropriate selection from the variety of concepts.

Secondly, from a personal-social perspective (2) in accordance with the socioeconomic didactic principle of subject orientation, the subject area of the economy also includes what learners experience or label, describe or evaluate as 'the economy'. This encompasses the domain-specific socioeconomic areas of experience of children and young people, such as consumption, household, money, work, the market, organisations and the ecological environment (Hedtke, 2018, pp. 116–139). Children and young people are experts on their own socioeconomic life; they have differentiated ideas about their standard of living and socioeconomic well-being. Socioeconomic education must therefore create space for them to speak for

themselves and to contribute their experiences and views. This means that the learners' socioeconomic subjective life-worlds are an integral part of the subject area.

Thirdly, socioeconomic didactics also draws on the use contexts or area of application (perspective 3) to define the subject matter 'economy'. It thus defines the subject area as the field for which the knowledge and skills labelled 'economic' or 'economically relevant' are provided and acquired, and in which they then become, or should become, effective. Education thus encompasses three forms of knowledge: the (potentially) practical knowledge and skills 'for the economy', the social science knowledge 'about the economy' and the individual and social ideas 'of the economy'. Incidentally, the reference to application is very often instrumentalised (e.g. financial education, entrepreneurship education), in particular to legitimise an expansion of conventional *economics* education, for example as a separate subject at school.

Fourthly, the didactics of socioeconomics addresses the subject area of socioeconomic education from a genuinely subject-didactic perspective (4). Informed by social science knowledge, it reconstructs the economic contexts in which learners (potentially) activate their domain-specific knowledge and skills both now and in the future. Every educational concept and every core curriculum is implicitly or explicitly based on the economic worlds *created* by the subject didactics. In accordance with the standards of scientific transparency, these socioeconomic subject-philosophical constructs must be revealed and made accessible to academic and political discourse – and, of course, to learners themselves.

3. Curricular key elements

The following section presents an overview of the key elements of the Socioeconomic Curriculum, which form the basis of its mandatory framework (cf. Hedtke, 2018, pp. 23–25). In comparison to other didactic approaches, this core structure is notably distinct. Subsequently, the content areas are presented (3.1), and the fundamental principles of curricular planning in socioeconomic education are outlined (3.2).

The SEC employs the traditional format of content areas as its principal structure (see Figure 3.1). From this, it develops a temporal structure for educational processes, allocating content areas to the year levels of an educational programme. The overarching target structure of the SEC is delineated by three guiding competences and three meta-competences, while its more specific set of objectives encompasses twelve core competences.

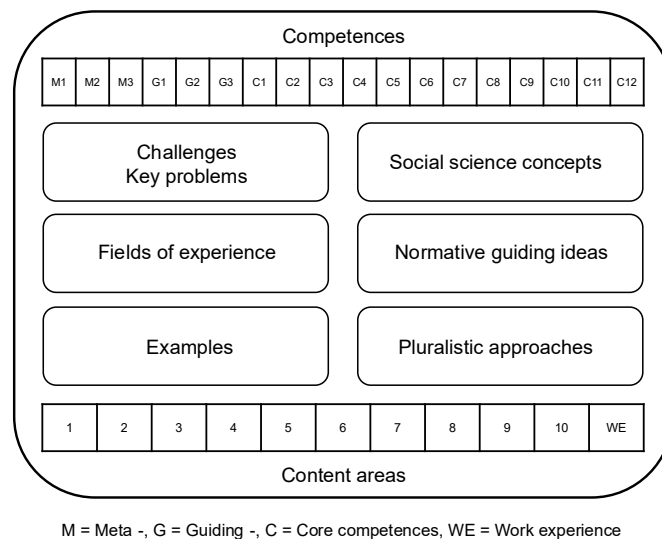
Six curricular key elements constitute the common formal structure of all content areas, with differentiation in content for each area. This results in a content structure for the socioeconomic domain that extends across the entire educational programme.

The SEC provides learners with a structured opportunity to examine (1) *challenges* or social key problems in a systematic manner, with each challenge assigned to a specific content area within the curriculum. In order to address these issues, the curriculum places an emphasis on (2) *concepts* from the fields of social science,

which are also allocated to specific content areas. The SEC consistently addresses the (3) socioeconomic *fields of experience* of young learners. It assigns one (4) normative *guiding idea* ('Leitidee') to each of the content areas and experience fields, which can be especially well traced, analysed, empirically criticised, controversially discussed and compared with others in these areas. Examples of particularly relevant guiding ideas are efficiency, freedom of consumption, success/performance and care (Hedtke, 2018, pp. 317–351).

Taken together, these four key elements represent the problem-experience-concept structure of the educational programme in the socioeconomic sub-domain. This grid can be employed as a tool for the medium- and long-term planning of teaching and learning. For each content area, the SEC proposes (5) *examples* for teaching. To mitigate the risk of plurality being overlooked in practice, social and academic contexts, plurality is embedded in the core element (6) *pluralistic approaches*. This emphasises concepts pertinent to plurality and suitable for teaching.

Fig. 3.1 Key Elements of the Socioeconomic Curriculum



Source: Author; cf. Hedtke, 2018, p. 24.

The six key elements correspond to the socioeconomic didactic principles outlined above (see Section 2.1, Figure 2.1.1). The core element of *challenges* is based on the principles of problem and subject orientation. The element of social science (basic) *concepts* corresponds to the principle of social science. The *experiential spaces* as a curriculum element ensure the principle of subject orientation, which includes experience orientation. The element of normative *guiding ideas* comprises

several guiding ideas, each of which must be interpreted in a controversial manner and confronted with alternative perspectives. In this way, it links the principle of subject orientation with that of plurality and simultaneously anchors basic aspects of ethics and philosophy of science in the curriculum. The principle of plurality is concretised in the *pluralistic approaches* element through the concepts identified therein.

In addition to the normative guiding ideas, the core curriculum integrates another innovative approach as an option: the *re-enactment of humanity issues* ('Menschheitsthemen'), i.e. outstanding discoveries or experiences in human history, which are taken up as collective learning events. These are 'performed' as teaching pieces ('Lehrstück'; Leps, 2004) and may also be explored through study of classical works. The simulation project on the founding of a village is an example, which includes the design of an economic order (Petrik, 2013). Furthermore, each content area is linked to a particularly suitable domain-specific method ('Leitmethode').

The aforementioned key elements are exemplified in the following sections with reference to content areas and competences (section 3.1 and 3.2).

3.1. Content areas

The structure of the SEC is based on ten content areas and the special element of the work placement (Hedtke, 2018, pp. 66–94). It was designed in accordance with two criteria. First, the structure must be sufficiently compatible with the existing anchor subjects of socioeconomic education at lower secondary level in the federal states. Second, it must be feasible in terms of subject matter, content core, level of demand and competences, number and teaching time requirements.

In view of these requirements, the SEC consists of ten content areas: Household and gender, enterprise and production, market and price, consumption and nature, labour and labour policy, money and credit, distribution and supply, economy and politics, economy and nature, development and world economy. The example provided in section 3.2 (Table 3.2.1) offers an overview of the specific organisation and content of the Socioeconomic Curriculum at the lower secondary level. It is important to note that a curricular approach that revisits a content area repeatedly throughout an educational programme and addresses it in greater depth (in the sense of a spiral curriculum) can also be beneficial.

In addition to the normative guiding principles, the subject-specific core of a content area comprises socioeconomic basic concepts and concepts, which are particularly suitable for exploring it. The following examples will serve to illustrate this.

For the content area market and price, exchange is a suitable basic concept, supplemented by the concepts of market, competition and contract (see Hedtke, 2018, pp. 70–71). The concepts of market communication, product quality and economic fluctuation can also be employed. Plurality is first and foremost represented by different market models, which can be illustrated using two simple examples, preferably from microeconomics and economic sociology. However, approaches to self-regulation and market failure, or the relationship between co-operation and

competition in markets, which are controversial in academic and political discourse, are also relevant to pluralism.

Another illustrative example is the content area of distribution and provision, which the SEC provides for higher grades (see Hedtke, 2018, pp. 77–78). The fundamental concept of prosperity can be concretised with the concepts of the welfare state, insurance and social security, distribution, as well as property, life risks and capabilities. The inherent plurality is expressed in academic and political debates about collective and individual responsibility, solidarity versus marketisation and alternative approaches to retirement provision.

Finally, another content area is outlined, labour and labour politics (see Hedtke, 2018, pp. 73–75). The concept of paid work is further developed by the concepts of the labour market, gender relations and industrial relations. Additionally, technology, collective interests and self-regulation can be considered. The quality of work, occupational safety versus precariousness and the entrepreneurial right of direction in tension with employee co-determination are controversial in academic, political and social terms. Therefore, they are suitable as examples of plurality.

3.2. Curricular planning

If the content areas are linked in a matrix with the key elements of the Socioeconomic Curriculum, a curricular planning grid is obtained for the anchor subject of socioeconomic education. It can be used to systematise annual didactic planning or planning over a multi-year course of socioeconomic education. Table 3.2.1 shows an example of the concretisation of the SEC for an entire socio-economic education programme. Of course, alternative arrangements, focal points and examples can be elaborated. For example, ‘gender’ and ‘nature’ are transversal content perspectives that can also be anchored in other content areas.

Table 3.2.1 A medium- to long-term planning framework for the teaching of the Socioeconomic Curriculum

Content areas	Core elements	Relevant challenges	Primary learners' experience spaces	Exemplary normative guiding principle	Prominent basic concept of social sciences (*)	Plural approaches (example)	Suitable concrete examples
Household & gender		Good life Gender relations Precarity	Private household work	Supply (care)	Community	Actor models	Organisation chart, budget plan
Enterprise & production		Predictability Calculation Innovation	Organisation labour	Efficiency	Organisation	Stakeholders	Balance sheet, price calculation
Market & price		Uncertainty Complexity Coordination	Market money	Success	Exchange	Market models	Marketing concept, product test
Consumption & nature		Climate change Consumer society 'Cost justice'	Consumption environment	Freedom of consumption	Identity	Unlimitedness/sufficiency	Ecological footprint, consumption styles
Labour & labour policy		Good Work Unemployment Participation	Part-time jobs	Performance	Paid work	Performance/payment	Employment biography, collective bargaining
Money & credit		Financing Instability Financial power	Money	Trust	Money	Understandings of money	Money creation, borrowing
Distribution & provision		Secure life Participation Standard of living	Private household	Justice	Prosperity	Pension systems	Health insurance, basic income
Economy & politics		Good governance Economic crisis Public funding	Politics	Common good	Institution	Market/state relationship	Policy trade-offs; tax rates
Economy & nature		Climate change Irreversibility Maintenance of resources	Environment	Sustainability	Materiality	Forms of steering	Ecological balance, air traffic
Development & world economy		Poverty Development Imbalance	Consumption	Globality	Interdependency	Convergence/divergence	Trade agreement, trade balance
Work placement		Career choice Digitalisation Work ethic	Labour organisation	Practice	Occupation	Job profiles (leitbilder)	Training relationship company regulations

Source: Author; cf. Hedtke, 2018, p. 29, (*) The basic concepts mentioned need to be complemented by other concepts with an affinity to the content area (see section 3.1).

Teachers, subject groups and sometimes school conferences are faced with the task of developing local concepts from the prescribed core curricula (internal school curriculum). Table 3.2.2 shows an incomplete example of the local organisation of the SEC. The key points for lesson units concretise the basic features of a socio-economic learning and teaching culture by defining lesson topics, relevant areas of experience, content areas, suitable examples and approaches as well as a key method. This exemplary proposal organises the learning process mainly in the form of thematically structured teaching units, occasionally as courses, once even in the form of a play on a theme of humanity.

Table 3.2.2 Some examples of internal school theme planning

Selected challenges or key problems	Related fields of experience	Focus on content area; related areas	Thematic example	Approach to the subject matter	Key method
Teaching theme: The main thing is having a job? What people work for and who sets the conditions.					
Good work	Part-time jobs	Labour & labour policy Distribution & provision	Collective bargaining conflict	Key problem	Simulation game
Subject of instruction without guiding theme:					
Not applicable	Money	Money & credit	Money creation	Course	Modelling
Teaching theme: Is there enough for everyone? How to ensure a dignified life and who should be responsible?					
Participation	Private household	Distribution & provision Market & price	Basic income	Re-enactment of humanity issues	Teaching piece 'welfare state'
Teaching theme: Everyone gives what they can? How the state raises revenue and what it does with it.					
State funding	Media	Economy & politics Money & credit	Wage tax	Key problem	Case study 'tax evasion'

Source: Author; cf. Hedtke, 2018, pp. 31-32.

3.3. Competences

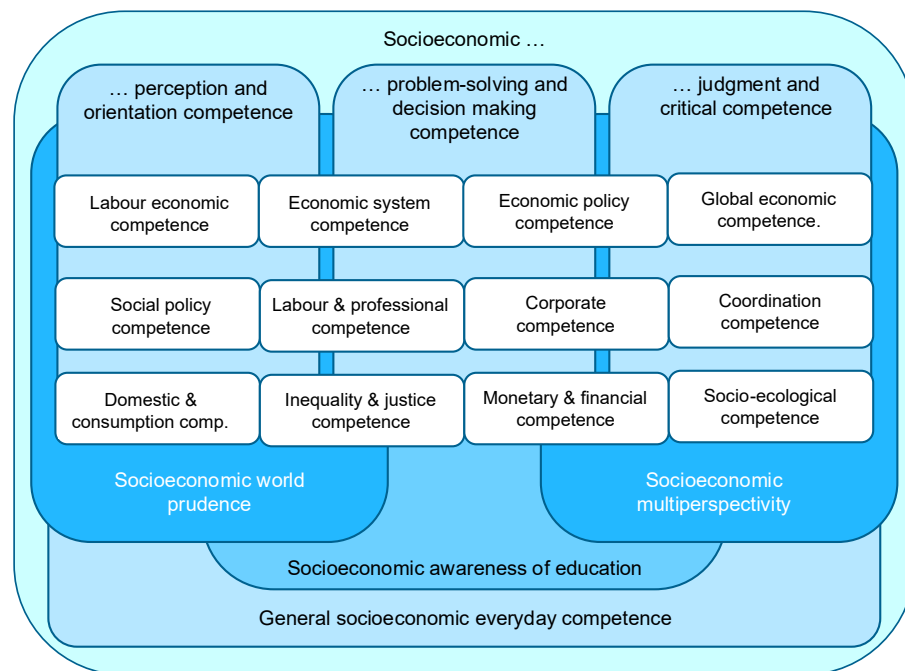
The following section outlines the competences of the SEC that are characteristic of socioeconomic education in the sense of 'Bildung'. The three *guiding competences* of perception and orientation, problem-solving and decision-making as well as the ability to judge and criticise are only mentioned here (see Figure 3.1; Kutscha, 2014, p. 74). In addition, twelve core competences with a stronger focus on content (see Fig. 3.3.1). It is evident that a transformational education is based on self-

reflective *meta-competences*. The SEC places three meta-competences at the centre (cf. Hedtke, 2018, pp. 266–270):

Worldly wisdom: Appropriately engaging with a situation, but also disengaging from it and reflectively distancing oneself from it, relating it to other situations, and assessing whether one can and should act and what form of action is appropriate (*‘Weltklugheit’*; Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991/2006, pp. 232–236; Pfriem, 2015).

Multiperspectivity: Identify, classify, explain, empirically trace and describe phenomena of social, economic, political and scientific multiperspectivity, assess their consequences and recognise, adopt, change, compare and reflect on different perspectives beyond one’s own.

Fig. 3.3.1 The SEC framework of socioeconomic competences



Source: Author; cf. Hedtke, 2018, p. 34.

If education is understood as a name “for the reflexive mode of human being in the world” (Marotzki, 2006, p. 61; own translation), then reflecting on one's own socioeconomic education and the situations in which it takes place and to which it is directed is an indispensable element of this very education. The third meta-competence aims at this:

Educational awareness: Describe, interpret and critically reflect on the aims, principles and procedures of socioeconomic education, its achievements and limitations, as well as the interests associated with it, and assess them in relation to the personal self, world and social relations.

4. Concluding remarks

In their education, both in general and in socioeconomic education, young people are confronted with a number of transformation processes which they must both navigate and develop their own position in relation to. Firstly, this applies to the development and differentiation of their own self, world and other relations, which can be conceptualised as processes of personal transformation or *Bildung*. Simultaneously, educational policy and interest groups are urging young people to transform their personalities, modes of thinking and acting. This may entail adopting an entrepreneurial mindset, making provisions and investments in financial markets, or reorganising their everyday lives in accordance with sustainability principles. Furthermore, significant transformations are occurring within the economy itself. These include the growing uncertainty of employment and income, climate adaptation, the restructuring of energy supply or spatial mobility, digitalisation and artificial intelligence, the uncertain future of globalisation, and the growing inequality of capabilities and wealth.

Socioeconomic education and the Socioeconomic Curriculum as one of its products address these transformations in four distinct ways. Firstly, they adopt a transformative perspective on education as a personal process (transformational theory of *Bildung*). Secondly, they address socioeconomic transformations in the economy, society and politics as core educational topics in a problem-oriented approach. Thirdly, they focus on experience and problem-orientation with the objective of initiating reflective educational processes. Fourthly and finally, the SEC offers a differentiated concept and set of instruments with which the practice of socioeconomic teaching and learning can be transformed in such a way that it can fulfil the requirements of the transformations to a reasonable extent. This article has presented some curricular elements that appear to be suitable for this. It is to be hoped that they will be taken up, tested, utilised and further developed. A transformative world requires transformative socioeconomic education.

References

- Biesta, G. (2020). Risking Ourselves in Education: Qualification, Socialization, and Subjectification Revisited. *Educational Theory*, 70(1), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12411>
- Biesta, G. J. J. (2010). *Good education in an age of measurement: Ethics, politics, democracy. Interventions: education, philosophy & culture*. Paradigm Publishers.
- Boltanski, L., & Thévenot, L. (2006). *On justification: Economies of worth*. Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1991)
- Boulding, K. E. (1986). What Went Wrong with Economics? *The American Economist*, 30(1), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/056943458603000101>
- Bowles, S. (2004). *Microeconomics: Behavior, Institutions, and Evolution*. Russell Sage; Princeton University Press.
- Combe, A., & Gebhard, U. (2012). *Verstehen im Unterricht: Zur Rolle von Phantasie und Erfahrung*. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften (GWV). <http://gbv.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=970914>
- Engartner, T. (2020). Cornerstones of socio-economic education: on the importance of contextualising economic issues. *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education*, 10(4), 335–349. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJPEE.2019.106099>
- Fischer, A., Oefftering, T., Hantke, H., & Oppermann, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Lebensweltorientierung und lebensweltorientierte Lernaufgaben: Wieviel Lebensweltorientierung ist im Unterricht möglich? Fachdidaktische Zugänge*. Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.
- Fischer, A. & Zurstrassen, B. (Eds.). (2014). *Sozioökonomische Bildung*. Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung.
- Flores-Camacho, F., & Gallegos-Cázares, L. (2024). Representational Pluralism in Science Education: A Point of View from the Inferential-Pragmatical Approach of Scientific Representations. *Science & Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11191-024-00559-3>
- Graupe, S. (2019). ‘To see the world with different eyes’: thoughts on existential orientation in socio-economic education. *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education*, 10(4), 369–382. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJPEE.2019.106127>
- Hedtke, R. (2018). *Das Sozioökonomische Curriculum*. Wochenschau Verlag.
- Hedtke, R. (2023a). Socio|economic education – an example of the relationship between disciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. *Inter- and Transdisciplinary Education Itdb*, 79–102.
- Hedtke, R. (2023b). *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Eine Theorie der sozioökonomischen Bildung*. Wochenschau.
- Herzog, L. (2013). *Inventing the market: Smith, Hegel, and political theory*. Oxford University Press. <http://lib.myilibrary.com/detail.asp?id=479881>

- Hickman, C., Marks, E., Pihkala, P., Clayton, S., Lewandowski, R. E., Mayall, Elouise E., Wray, Britt, Mellor, C., & van Susteren, L. (2021). Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey. *Lancet Planet Health*(5), e863-873.
- Hodgson, G. M. (2002). *How economics forgot history: The problem of historical specificity in social science*. Routledge.
- Horst, S. (2023). Why pluralism? In M. Bélanger, P. Potvin, S. Horst, A. Shtulman, & E. F. Mortimer (Eds.), *Routledge research in psychology. Multidisciplinary perspectives on representational pluralism in human cognition: Tracing points of convergence in psychology, philosophy of science, and science education* (pp. 284–301). Routledge.
- itdb 2023 = Hedtke, R., Ackermann, N., Apelojg, B., Bank, V., Birke, F., Stig Chistensen, A., Köhler, E., Bechtel, T., Lange, D., Löfström, J., Martinache, I., Pies, I., Pitsoulis, A., Schmidt, C., & Seeber, G. (2023). Forschungsforum “Sozioökonomische Bildung”. itdb inter- und transdisziplinäre Bildung, 1, 1–102. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8141502>
- Koller, H.-C., Marotzki, W., & Sanders, O. (Eds.). (2007). *Theorie bilden: Bd. 7. Bildungsprozesse und Fremdheitserfahrung: Beiträge zu einer Theorie transformatorischer Bildungsprozesse*. Transcript.
- Koller, H.-C. (2020). Problems and Perspectives of a Theory of Transformational Processes of Bildung. *Educational Theory*, 70(5), 633–651. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12448>
- Kutscha, G. (2014). Ökonomie am Gymnasium unter dem Anspruch des Bildungsprinzips: Diskursgeschichtlicher Rückblick und Zielperspektiven für die sozio-ökonomische Bildung. In A. Fischer & B. Zurstrassen (Eds.), *Sozioökonomische Bildung* (pp. 63–80).
- Leps, H. (2004). In Search for the Best Constitution. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 3(1), 85–96. <https://www.jsse.org/index.php/jsse/article/view/319/316>
- Marotzki, W. (1990). *Entwurf einer strukturalen Bildungstheorie: Biographietheoretische Auslegung von Bildungsprozessen in hochkomplexen Gesellschaften*. Deutscher Studien Verlag.
- Marotzki, W. (2006). Bildungstheorie und Allgemeine Biographieforschung. In H.-H. Krüger & W. Marotzki (Eds.), *Handbuch erziehungswissenschaftliche Biographieforschung* (2., überarb. und aktualisierte Aufl., pp. 59–70). VS, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Muijnck, S. de, & Tieleman, J. (2022). *Economy Studies: A Guide to Rethinking Economics Education*. Amsterdam University Press. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/67284f04-448a-4fb0-b9f3-24b23a912afd/9789048552801.pdf>
- Nelson, J. A. (1997). Feminism, ecology and the philosophy of economics. *Ecological Economics*, 20(2), 155–162. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009\(96\)00025-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009(96)00025-0)

- Neubauer, T., & Lehmann, A. (2017). *Bildung* as Transformation of Self-World-Relations. In A. Laros, T. Fuhr, & E. W. Taylor (Eds.), *Transformative Learning Meets Bildung: An International Exchange* (pp. 57–69). SensePublishers.
- Nohl, A.-M. (2017). Problematic Commonalities of *Bildung* and Transformative Learning. In A. Laros, T. Fuhr, & E. W. Taylor (Eds.), *Transformative Learning Meets Bildung: An International Exchange* (pp. 97–106). SensePublishers.
- Oefftering, T., Oppermann, J., Fischer, A., & Hantke, H. (2019). Lebensweltsituationsorientierte Konstruktion von Lernaufgaben in der sozioökonomischen Bildung. In C. Fridrich, R. Hedtke, & G. Tafner (Eds.), *Historizität und Sozialität in der sozioökonomischen Bildung* (pp. 265–291). Springer VS.
- Paillusson, F., & Booth, M. (2024). Embracing Representational Plurality to Bypass Misconceptions in Science Education. *Science & Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11191-024-00590-4>
- Petrik, A. (2013). *Von den Schwierigkeiten, ein politischer Mensch zu werden: Konzept und Praxis einer genetischen Politikdidaktik* (2nd ed.). Barbara Budrich.
- Pfriem, R. (2015). Weltklugheit statt ökonomischer Rationalität: Ein theoretischer Bezugsrahmen für Unternehmen als Akteure gesellschaftlicher Transformation, zugleich ein Beitrag zur Aktualisierung des aristotelischen Phronesis-Konzeptes. In A. Löhr & E. Burkatzki (Eds.), *Resozialisierung der ökonomischen Rationalität* (pp. 237–259). Metropolis.
- Reardon, J. (Ed.). (2009). *The handbook of pluralist economics education*. Routledge.
- Reiss, J. (2017). Philosophie der Ökonomik. In S. Lohse & T. Reydon (Eds.), *Grundriss Wissenschaftsphilosophie: Die Philosophien der Einzelwissenschaften* (pp. 583–614). WBG.
- Retzmann, T., Seeber, G., Remmele, B. & Jongbloed, H.-C. (2010). *Educational Standards for Economic Education at All Types of General-education Schools in Germany. Final Report to the Gemeinschaftsausschuss der Deutschen Gewerblichen Wirtschaft (Working Group „Economic Education“)*. Essen, Lahr, Kiel. <https://econpapers.repec.org/RePEc:duj:wpa-per:1002>
- Robbins, L. (1932). *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*. Macmillan.
- Seeber, G., Retzmann, T., Remmele, B. & Jongbloed, H.-C. (2012). Bildungsstandards der ökonomischen Allgemeinbildung. Kompetenzmodell, Aufgaben, Handlungsempfehlungen. Wochenschau.
- Veerle, M. (2016). The Importance of Unpaid Work in OECD Countries: Focus on Gender Differences. In M. Budowski, U. Knobloch, & M. Nollert (Eds.), *Differenzen. Unbezahlt und dennoch Arbeit* (pp. 55–78). Seismo.