



Education as Empowerment to Shape the Future: Promoting Learners' Flourishing through Socio-moral Growth

Living in a complex global, interconnected, and fast changing world means being a continuous learner. Education is one key factor for enabling individuals to realise their potential, i.e., to lead meaningful, productive lives, and contribute to shaping their social, natural, communal, and political environment. To help achieve this, I argue that schools and educational institutions must provide their learners not only with opportunities to learn, but also with opportunities to grow. These opportunities for growth refer to the development of social-emotional and socio-moral competences that enable learners to successfully and responsibly interact and collaborate with others, form meaningful social relationships, and contribute, as active agents, to the shaping of their (school) environment.

Social-emotional and socio-moral competences have been shown to be key factors in successful academic adjustment and success, both in school and out-of-school settings. At school, these competences are developed and promoted in the context of social relationships, especially between teachers and learners, and between learners themselves. Using the concept of the "self-in-relationship" as point of departure, I will draw on both theoretical conceptualisations and empirical findings to highlight three core areas of socio-moral and social-emotional functioning and development that have a significant impact on learners' (academic and non-academic) flourishing: (a) the quality of social relationships at school; (b) teachers' own socio-emotional and socio-moral functioning as part of their professionalism; and (c) school culture and climate. To concretise the relationships between these areas I will use the phenomenon of school bullying as an example and introduce the concept of a "whole education approach" as a way of aligning educational efforts at different levels of the education system. I will conclude my lecture with a brief discussion of some of the educational conditions necessary for the exercise of socio-moral agency as a means of promoting one's own flourishing and the flourishing of others.



Prof. Dr. Eveline Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger

Schwyz University of Teacher Education
Switzerland