

What is socioeconomic education and what does it want?

Positions of the Association for Socioeconomic Education and Research

Socioeconomic education does justice to the diversity of economic thought and action and promotes freedom, solidarity and participation. It is guided by and contributes to an understanding of justice, the common good and sustainability and contributes. It sees the economy as embedded in society, and its objects are people and their lifeworlds, practices, institutions and rules. Socioeconomic education starts from a personal and reflexive concept of education as *Bildung* and creates spaces where educators can contribute, negotiate and practice their ideas and values.

The economy must be analysed, discussed and interpreted in its social and lifeworld context, embedded in its political framework and in its historicity. Socioeconomic education explores the field of economy primarily through reference to economics, political science, sociology, philosophy and law. It regards the diversity of academic discourse as a valuable resource and draws on theories from different schools of thought. The Association for Socioeconomic Education and Research promotes freedom of thought, judgment and action along the following five lines:

The economy needs society.

To understand and shape the economy, its social embedding and interactions with, for example, politics, law, health, the environment and the family must be taken into account. The economy requires resources that it cannot guarantee. Examples include trust, willingness to cooperate, non-market work, legal certainty and morality. The economy requires contributions from society and at the same time shapes society, creating prosperity and participation, but also inequality and the exploitation of people and nature.

The economy serves people.

People create the economy through social and cultural practices. Economic interrelationships are not based on natural laws and people are not subject to the economy like natural laws. The economy creates tensions between the individual and society, present and the future. It is humane when it aims at the common good and a good life for all. This inevitably includes the preservation of nature. Socioeconomic education recognises the plurality of personal positions on economic issues and the economy. This implies respect for spaces in one's own life and in society where the primacy of economic thinking should not apply.

Economic activity is always normative.

The economy and economic activities are indivisible from normative ideas. Economic practices are dependent on social legitimisation and rules. They are not value-neutral, but need to be critically and reflectively analysed, justified and shaped. The plurality of values, norms and life concepts must be taken into account, as must the normative impact of models on economic practice.

Freedom of academic thought.

The academic disciplines analyse the economy from different perspectives. They use different theories and offer a variety of explanations, some of which contradict each other. On this basis, they make recommendations to science, economic practice, politics and private individuals. This includes economic competences. Socioeconomic education guarantees a competent, critical and self-determined approach to scientific plurality. In this way, it ensures the exercise of one's right to think independently about the economy and science.

Critical thinking about the economy.

Experiencing social crises challenges established practices and knowledge, and demands openness, creativity and innovation in economic thinking and action. Socioeconomic education encourages new ways of thinking and empowers to critically engage with unquestioned assumptions and supposed constraints. It promotes reflexive and decisive action.

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