# EDC/HRE FOR PRINCIPALS



## Awareness
A culture of cooperative learning supports the culture of democracy

## Preparation
Addressing the challenges

## Action
Your school – a learning community

## LEARNING

## LEARNING

## Learning

Schools do more than teaching knowledge and skills to students. A school is also the first institution that pupils enter at an early age, and it is a community that socializes the students, strongly influencing their attitudes and values – and those of staff members too. In school, students spend most of their time in class with their teachers and peers. Thus, if you, as the principal, want your school to become more democratic, it is essential that you seek to include what takes place in the classroom, involving students and teachers.

As principal, you ought to keep out of the teachers' business in the classroom, and in some countries, you are not even allowed to intervene. Let us hope that your teachers have been trained to encourage their students to participate in decision-making and that they take responsibility for developing the class community and facilities as best as possible. From the teachers' point of view, it makes all the difference if they are left alone with such efforts, or if they know that their school leader not only strongly approves of their democratic approach, but is also willing to support them with all his means. Learning about democracy in school requires a holistic school approach that amounts to more than an addition of initiatives in some, or even all, classes. Teachers need opportunities to share and reflect their experiences and receive new input and ideas. In other words, a democratic school community is a learning community. This sequence offers you, the principal, ideas and tools to initiate, co-ordinate, contribute to, and support your school on its path to democracy.

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*Learning*

## Dealing with learning is part of your job. Is teaching part of it as well?

Many people knock on your office door, often in need of guidance, advice, and answers. If there is an issue, more often than not, you will be cleaning it up. You are responsible for the organization of the school. You want to have good results. You manage a school, so whatever you do has a huge impact on teaching and learning.

There are several hidden or visible debates concerning teaching at school. For example, is teaching the sacred event that happens in the classrooms exclusively the realm of teachers and learners? Are there any common links between different subjects, especially those that deal with science, value-oriented or physical education? Is there a connection between the work that occurs in the classroom, in the lab or in the schoolyard? Shouldn't the school principal rather deal with his or her administrative work and leave teaching to the specialists?

Regardless of the fact that almost worldwide, school laws and regulations demand lively democratic teaching goals, despite the evolution of pedagogy and didactics that describes the path from authoritarian teaching to cooperative learning, in today's schools, one can find all varieties of teaching practices, ranging from believing that teaching is a transmission of knowledge to accepting that it is a multifactor process.

However, if democracy is to be taught, it must not only be cognitively known, but also tried and experienced. Thus, teaching time, which comprises most of the time spent in school, is an essential agent, and the role of the principal in that effort is crucial.

## What, why, what for and how we learn to influence the way citizens see themselves in a society

School is where students prepare for their roles as citizens and decision makers in adult life. Moreover, school is more than a place where students are being prepared for life – school IS life. As educators and students acknowledge this fact, the principal must embrace the challenge of leading the way.

The question of what, why, what for and how we learn is not to be taken lightly. It is the key question that teaching professionals and practitioners need to answer whenever they think about how to best serve their students. It leads you, the school principal, and particularly those teachers who set themselves the goal that all students should achieve their best possible results, to adopt a student-centered approach. What does this mean?

### The wrapped gift box

At the beginning of the school year, each teacher holds a wrapped gift box in his or her hand. Its contents have been described as the curriculum or even as a textbook, to be delivered, given or taught to students, and to be learned at a certain level. To a smaller extent, the gift box contains pieces of science. The ministry of education, or the local authorities have put together the basic content. It is up for the teacher to decide how to prepare this box, how to present it to the students with instructions following its unpacking. Although the contents may be the same, teachers can find many ways of arranging them in the box. They can also improvise on what and how to rearrange the content, how to wrap and decorate it, how to give it to the students with suggestions of, ways to unpack it. Even if this procedure – amounting to the process of teaching and learning – is repeated year by year, there are so many different ways for each step, that the interaction between students and teachers can prove to be new and different every time.

### What makes a gift box?

A wrapped box is interesting in itself, and even more so if its wrapping appeals to the receiver. When selecting a gift, one can either have one's own interests in mind, or the recipient's. Depending on the giver's choice, a wrapped gift box can turn out to be a joy or a disaster. Teachers have all the means at hand to ensure that this gift will be a success. They master their science, and through experience they know a lot about the learners' needs and interests. Curiosity is a natural characteristic of humankind. We owe the evolution of civilization to curiosity. If teachers succeed in presenting their subject matter as an object to be discovered, or unwrapped, as it were, and if they also manage to arouse curiosity about it, they will help their students to extend their interests beyond their personal issues and broaden their scope in looking beyond their personal sphere of life.

### What kind of gift box opener are you?

Regardless of whether a gift box is unwrapped alone or together with others, there are several ways of using a brand-new object. Some need a manual before they touch it, while others are willing to accept the views and suggestions of whoever happens to be present. A third group, needing neither of the above, takes time to look, touch and experiment by themselves. In all situations, this whole event involves at least two persons, the giver and the receiver, but it has an impact on a bigger number of people around. Actually, it is something like the butterfly that flaps its wings somewhere south and the tornado rages far in the north. It is a social thing. Competences are necessary to make good use of the the package, including some knowledge about the contents, an understanding of their characteristics, but also methods and skills to present and discuss them, as well as an attitude of responsibility that unpacking, ownership and use of the contents can create.

It is fascinating that the contents can be different, but the process of handling is basically alike. What is more fascinating is that this process is crucial for the self-esteem and the role of learners as citizens in a society. What is even more fascinating is that the school principal is the one to conduct this whole celebration, because it concerns the profession of all teachers, regardless of their specific profiles.

## Teaching democracy and human rights as a whole- school approach

The principal's position may differ considerably from one country to another, but the way people learn best remains the same. Cooperation and peer learning, i.e. teachers learning from teachers, not only improve the quality of teaching and learning at your school, but also your school development resources. This process depends on your decision to initiate it together with your teachers and to organize and support it.

### Democratic communities depend on educated citizens

Our increasingly complex and dynamic societies require EDC/HRE as common background of every teaching activity at school, both in class and beyond. The level of education that students need today exceeds by far the mere ability to read, calculate and write. Rather, the education that students need today includes

- a better understanding of the world;
- logical, critical and creative thinking;
- the ability to link the abstract to the concrete;
- the ability to understand abstract concepts and symbols;
- the ability to interpret facts and findings of research;
- the ability to learn independently and cooperatively;
- in short, to become functionally literate.

Democratic communities depend on educated and competent citizens. Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE) addresses all the competences mentioned above and enriches them with the values and attitudes that comprise the culture of democracy. See *Competences For Democratic Culture*.

### EDC/HRE as a whole school approach

Literacy expands and bridges the boundaries between specialist fields of science and knowledge. Moreover, it creates a common ground that amplifies the scopes and goals of each academic subject, which prepares learners better for the challenges of today and in future. EDC/HRE responds to some of the urgent controversial issues of our societies and provides such a concept of literacy for a cross-curricular and whole-school approach. On the level of school subjects, teaching and learning does not need to be reinvented or restructured. Rather, they should be integrated into a broader perspective, bringing them together as a part of a whole. Every subject focuses on specific contents in the curriculum, and the specific methods and modes of reasoning that those contents and topics require. From a whole school perspective, school subjects may be conceived as a choir. Each voice is clearly audible, but the choir as a whole sings the same piece, which means that the school as a whole shares the same educational goals.

## A common background

A whole-school approach in teaching encourages teachers to work towards a single group in school community, as their teaching, no matter how different their subjects are, shares specific goals, needs and challenges. All teachers serve learners of the same age groups and face the same diversity among them, for example in their learning capacity. Moreover, acquiring the culture of democracy is a task for the whole school as well.

It follows that in educating for democracy and human rights, schools need a cross-curricular teaching approach to impart knowledge and understanding of democracy and human rights to their students, and to practise the skills, and teach the attitudes and values citizens need to participate and support democracy. This cohesive, collective and collaborative way of teaching also involves school workers, parents and the local community as well. Moreover, this approach enriches and strengthens teaching as the core principle of school life, in class, in the school yard and dining-hall, and even beyond the school's premises. There is no academic science or subject that can be dismissed from serving that educational need.

## School as a learning community

Discussions and new developments are permanently taking place in education. While it is impossible for every principal to be aware of everything some teachers at your school may have relevant information to share. Are these issues in education important for our school? How can we find out? Could we make better use of the time before and after lessons?

### A sustainable system

In every school community, teachers age more than other people. Students are always at the same age, and most parents also belong to the same age group, with minor exceptions. Thus, the ranks of teaching professionals at a school need replenishment and rejuvenation to counteract the trend, so as not to widen the age gap created by the years. School is a place of innovation, yet many teachers experience the disappointment of system changes that come and go. What is needed is a sustainable system that makes every day enjoyable besides getting the work done, that offers fulfilment and joy, and safeguards fun. Democracy is such a serious issue that it cannot survive without such a sustainable system.

Teachers must be able to understand school as a learning community, and a community where learning is practised. A learning community is aware that collaboration not only improves academic performance, but also helps the members of the community to develop self-knowledge and self-esteem. It is about creating a dynamic, competent participation through practice.

### Two basic elements

As far as teaching is concerned, a learning community depends on two basic elements: Connecting teaching to learning and creating a culture of collaboration for that purpose.

### Connecting teaching to learning

Let's take a common example: A teacher teaches a lesson to his/her best. Some of the students have mastered what was taught, some have questions, and others need more help and attention. Here two diverse needs arise: the teacher needs to follow the curriculum requirements and move to the next issue, while some of the students need more time to understand the subject lesson that has just been taught. There is not enough time for both of them. A learning community creates a wider range of possibilities to overcome such a dilemma in that all teachers care about every single learner's individual needs.

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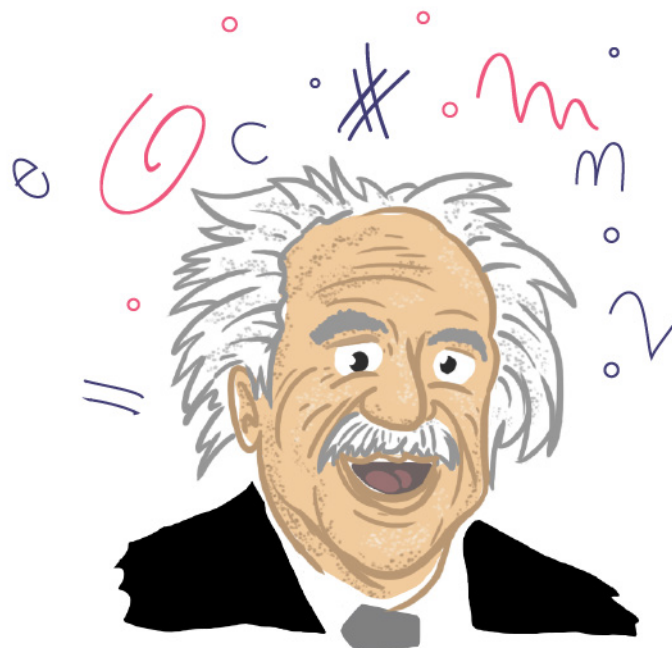
As there is a right to education, the school is obliged to offer equal learning opportunities, and teaching designed must to help all learners to achieve their learning goals. Therefore, is not enough for learners to be taught, but it must be ensured that they learn. No matter how simple it sounds, it is a difficult shift from traditional teaching habits. It means that there must be a research of practices that can ensure the equality of learning opportunities, no matter how different the teacher or the learner's characteristics may be. The outcomes of this research must be studied to deliver suitable indicators to describe the necessary steps and their evaluation.

## Creating a culture of collaboration

For teachers to act as a learning community, they must be bound together by a culture of collaboration. If every single learner's achievement is a common goal, then every teacher can contribute to it from a different perspective, offered either by the different subject that he/she teaches, or by the various teaching methods and strategies that teachers use. It follows that the teachers' collaboration cannot be limited by the traditional issues about school program, activities or discipline, but it has to focus on caring for every single learner's needs. This requires working together, discussing and analyzing teaching practices, and collaborative decisions to bring about improvements in professional, scientific, pedagogical or didactical issues. This kind of collaboration requires and encourages the development of co-operation skills that citizens also need in democratic participation, e.g. "identifying and setting group goals" and "sharing relevant and useful knowledge, experience or expertise with the group and persuading other group members to do so". See *Competences For Democratic Culture*, p. 49.

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## The culture of learning

As a principal, you cannot impose a culture of learning on your school, but the example that you set and your commitment is decisive. Therefore, your choice is one of the most important decisions a principal has to make: What kind of a culture of learning do you want your school to embrace? Are your teachers generally aware, that learners must be involved in their learning process, and that cooperative teaching and learning methods encourage them to critically approach, and take an interest in, all the possible dimensions of a topic, inviting them, to discuss and disagree, form their own opinions, argue for, negotiate and even change them. Such a culture of learning is not a luxury, and neither is in good teaching nor in education for democracy and human rights.

Moreover, such a culture of learning not only serves your students, but also has much in common with the culture of democracy. We may conceive school as a micro-community that offers young people opportunities to take responsibility for issues in school life and to experience decision-making processes in dealing with them. Democratic communities, both at the micro and macro level, are learning communities, as no player may define the common good alone. Majorities decide, but their decisions may fail to solve a problem or turn out to be unfair. A learning community can draw conclusions from such decisions and correct them.

How can teaching encourage and enable students to actively participate in their societies?

### The scientific method

Reasoning and justification are impossible if learners are uninterested. In didactics it is accepted that the essence of learning is motivation. Learners must be able to link the issue in question with their existing knowledge, and it must appeal to their interests. Both, knowledge and interests are to be cultivated in the learning process. In exploring the world, the "scientific method" has evolved. It is a step-by-step process that includes Observation, Question, Hypothesis, Experiment, Analysis, Conclusion and Start all over again. Reasoning and justification in teaching require that teachers take their learners' characteristics, interests and needs into consideration when planning or teaching their lessons. Enabling students to master the process of scientific research provides a good possible answer to the major "Why's" of teaching.

### Approach with care

The core element of democratic citizenship is what we call the "critical approach". It is a process that follows the steps of the scientific method. It requires that citizen be interested in the common good and familiar with the method of collecting information on different aspects before forming an opinion on an issue. Learners can be trained in critical thinking and judgement at school, requiring a whole school approach on behalf of the teachers. Students need plenty of tasks and learning opportunities across the range of subjects in the curriculum. Good teaching strongly overlaps with EDC/HRE. The CoE competence model for democratic culture includes skills that also draw on the scientific method, "Autonomous learning" and "Analytical and critical thinking". More: *Competences For Democratic Culture*, p. 49.



Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies
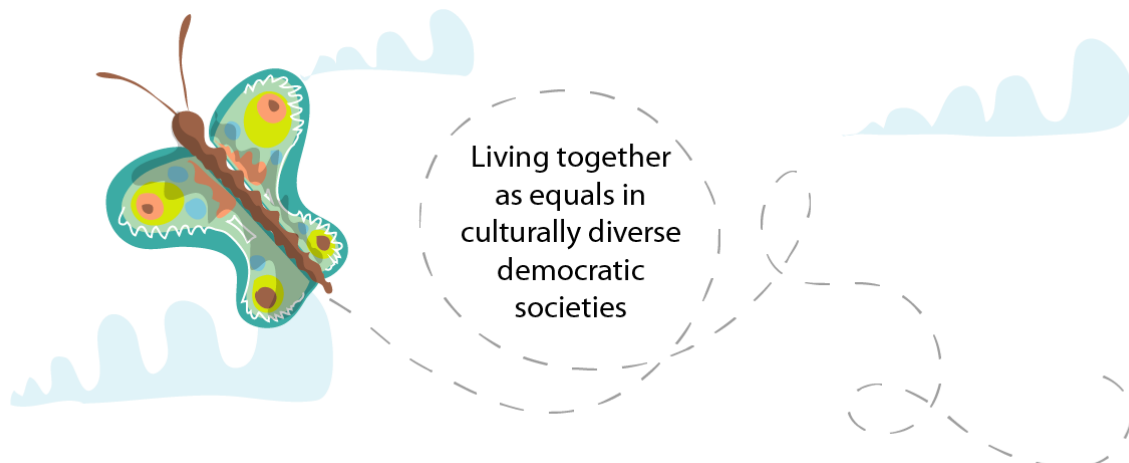
### Learning environment

In the school, classes are small communities where young citizens can be empowered and encouraged to play an active part. Teaching can provide young people with the basic skills they need to develop their competences in scientific research, critical thinking, participation and decision-making. The learners who have enriched their experience in such ways of learning are well prepared to become active and participatory democratic citizens.

### You are not alone

Perhaps this perspective on your role as a principal in developing a culture of learning at your school seems unfamiliar, and the tasks expected from you quite daunting. We are fully aware of the range of duties and responsibilities on your hands, and how time-consuming your legal obligations are. However, we can assure you that  you are not alone. The Council of Europe has a long history of promoting and developing Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE), in an on-going process in which principals from schools across Europe are involved. If you wish to learn more about the history of EDC/HRE, visit https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-1/unit-4/ on this website.

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## Value education encourages students' self-discipline

You are walking along a hallway in a school. The noise from a classroom tells you that a lesson has run out of control and the teacher is unable to cope with the situation. During or soon after the lesson, the teacher knocks on your door, and asks you to intervene. The students whom the teacher has identified as troublemakers will plead innocent, putting you into the uncomfortable position of a "High Judge". In such incidents, the teacher will lose respect from the students.

This scenario points to the weakness of the authoritarian style of school leadership: Students must be forced to obey the rules that have been set, and if they don't, the teacher is expected to enforce them. This makes teachers feel uneasy, facing a vast majority of possible troublemakers and foes in class. Permanent control, praise and punishment are the means at the teachers' hands to enforce order and discipline.

Student discipline is indeed essential for a school to work well. Moreover, school is the first institution that children and youth enter in their lives, and here students must learn to obey the law, not because they are forced to, but because they should understand and appreciate the necessity of the rule of law. However, a system of permanent surveillance and sanctions is neither feasible nor desirable, as such a school teaches students an attitude of obedience, leaving them unable to take responsibility for the school community.

Values are invisible, but they appear in a person's behavior. To a large extent, discipline cannot be enforced, but must rather grow from within. Values cannot be preached, but are learned from good examples. As role models, your and your staff's attitude is decisive for the development of a democratic, value-based school community.

If you ask students what they expect from school, their answers show that they often expect more than a school can deliver. They wish to spend their time well, and want their school to function properly, although their behavior may sometimes be disruptive. Therefore, it is possible to convince the students that no community can function without rules, and that this also applies to democratic communities. See "Rethinking discipline and order from a democratic point of view" https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-1/chapter-2/lesson-5/.

If students share the values that school rules promote, they will be willing to accept and appreciate them. In Competences for democratic culture, published by the Council of Europe, these values include "support for the rule of law and equal and impartial treatment of all citizens under the law as a means of ensuring justice" (more: *Competences For Democratic Culture*, p 38, no 7).

Value-based rules need to be discussed and communicated in class, and here, EDC/HRE plays an important part. *Growing up in democracy*, Volume II in the series of EDC/HRE manuals for teachers, describes a small project in which students assess the school rules in place, identify the underlying values and principles, and discuss suggestions to revise and improve the rules. The Cover picture of this volume, showing students signing the school rules they have adopted by majority vote, highlights the learning potential of this project as it allows students to participate in decision-making in school. The issue is meaningful and a true part of real school life. Educating for democratic citizenship and the values of democratic culture is possible with all age groups. *Growing up in democracy* addresses teachers at the primary level, so the project for participation in decision-making in school can be adapted for older students. See https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/unit-5/.

Students are perfectly aware that their behavior needs to be monitored, and that rules will be enforced if they are broken. This remains the principal's and the staff's responsibility, in accordance with school legislation. Those students who have developed an attitude of civic-mindedness, "a sense of accountability to other people within the community and accepting that one is answerable to others for one's decisions and actions" (more: *Competences For Democratic Culture* p. 41), will create fewer disciplinary issues, as they have developed self-discipline and can take responsibility for their behavior.

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## Competences for democratic culture: a diagram

Source: See *Competences for democratic culture*
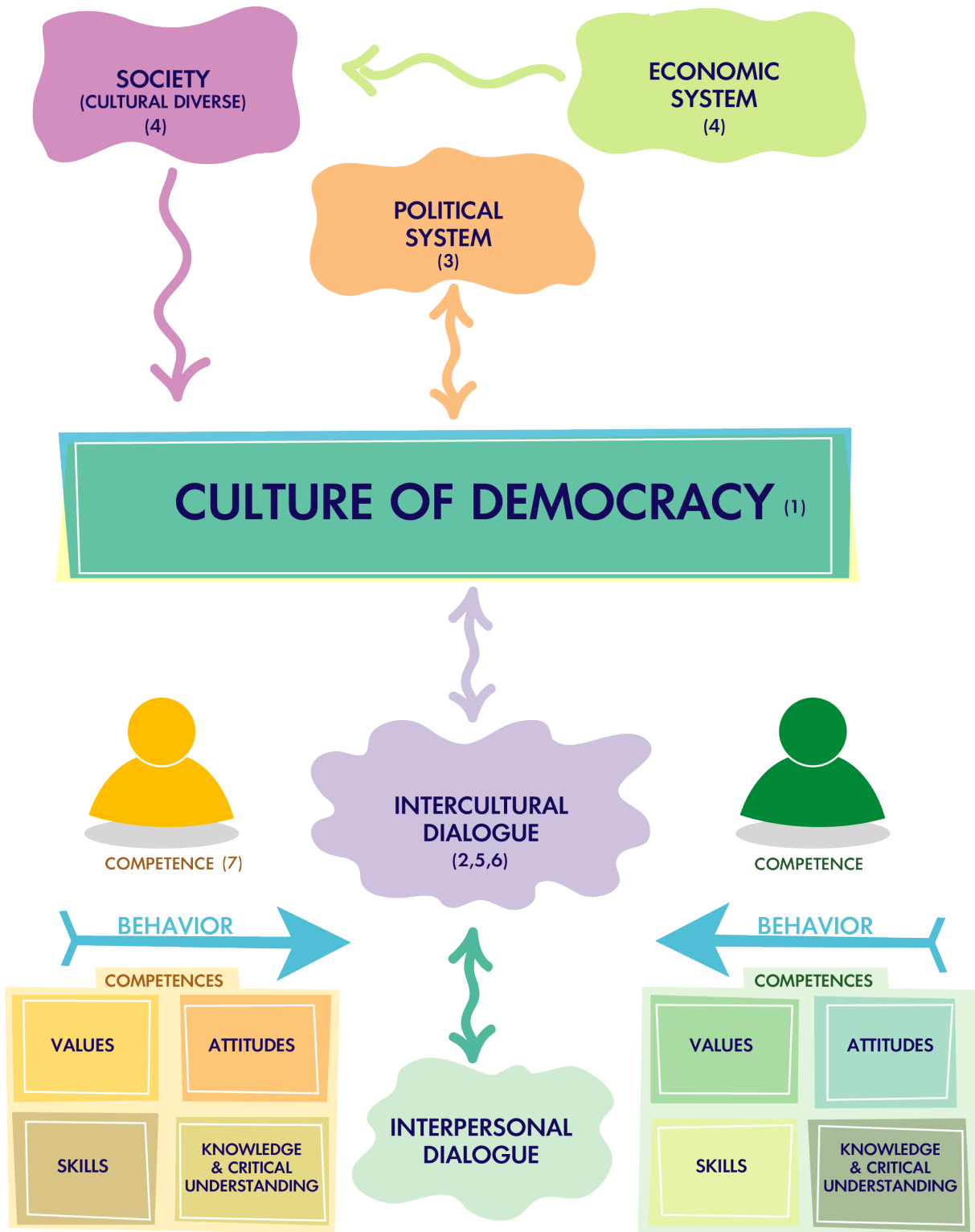
Figures no 1 – 7 refer to the notes

## Diagram of Competences for democratic culture: notes

Page numbers refer to *Competences for democratic culture*

This diagram is an attempt to visualize the conceptual model of competences that citizens need to create, and participate in, a culture of democracy (see p. 9). A model is designed to resemble reality in a simplified way, focusing on some key aspects and omitting many others. A road map, for example, is a model of the road network in a certain area, which is useful because it shows so little else. Likewise, the model of competences for democratic culture works like a map. It shows how our behavior as individuals is linked to democratic culture as a whole, and how schools can play their part to educate their students for democratic citizenship.

The diagram and the following notes are intended to assist the readers of the manual Competences for democratic culture, but it does not replace it. They are intended for in-service training for teachers and principals, or information for parents and external stakeholders.

1. The institutional framework of democracy (the political system) cannot function or survive unless it is supported by a culture of democracy that all citizens share. In such a culture of democracy, citizens are committed to observe the rule of law and human rights and to resolve issues of general concern in public. They are convinced that conflicts must be resolved peacefully, and they acknowledge and respect diversity in society. Citizens are willing to express their own opinions, as well as to listen to the opinions of others. They are committed to a decision-making process based on majority vote as well as to the protection of minorities and their rights. They are willing to engage in dialogue across cultural divides (see p. 15). The institutional structures of democracy and the culture of democracy are "inherently interdependent" (p. 15), which means neither area is self-sustaining if not supported by the other. The strength of the culture of democracy depends not only on competent citizens, but also to what extent the key elements mentioned above are shared rather than contested or disputed (see note 6).

2. When citizens participate in discussions and decision-making, they meet others whose cultural background is different. Intercultural dialogue between citizens is therefore the hallmark of culturally diverse democratic societies. Citizens who are willing to engage in dialogue across cultural divides treat each other as democratic equals. Intercultural dialogue needs to be embedded in a culture of democracy, and vice versa a democratic culture cannot thrive without an intercultural dialogue. Democratic culture and intercultural dialogue are "inherently interdependent" (p. 15), linking the macro level of society to the micro level of interaction between individuals. This idea is summed up in the logo of this website, Living Democracy.

3. Competent citizens are a necessary precondition for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, but competences alone are not sufficient. The effect of political institutions on the macro level is crucial: "… depending on their configuration, institutional arrangements can enable, channel, constrain or inhibit the ways in which citizens exercise their democratic and intercultural competences." (p. 17) For example, citizens who are able and willing to participate in decision-making need access to uncensored media information, and they need channels through which they can communicate with each other and with policy makers.

4. There is a second bundle of factors on the macro level that may produce "systemic patterns of disadvantage and discrimination" (p. 18) so that citizens who have equal levels of democratic and intercultural competences face unequal opportunities to exercise them and to participate in decision-making. Social inequality may be due to show in unequal distribution of income, disposable time, access to information or communication networks, and power resources. The unequal allocation of resources within societies are linked to the economic system (e.g. unequal pay, unemployment, power of international enterprises) and/or the political system. Divisions between privileged and disadvantaged groups may give rise to issues of gender inequality, poverty, migration, education, or control of power. "Systematic marginalisation and exclusion from democratic processes and intercultural exchanges" (p. 18) may disempower many citizens to participate on equal terms, regardless of their levels of competence, resulting in "civic disengagement and alienation" (ibid.).

5. If not adequately addressed, social inequality may be perceived as unfair and may threaten the democratic culture and the legitimacy of the institutional framework of democracy. In democratic communities, it is therefore crucial to deal with issues of social inequality and exclusion to ensure "genuine

equality of condition" (ibid.) for all citizens. That said, it is important to remember that distributive justice, or human and civil rights are historic achievements taking place over a long period of time, as the struggle for universal suffrage and women's rights across Europe shows. Human rights and democratic participation have developed in a long, still on-going process. The commitment of competent citizens is therefore decisive to ensure that all members of society, regardless of their social status, enjoy recognition and equal opportunity of participation.

6. The concept of culture: "Any given culture may be conceived as having three main aspects: the material resources that are used by members of the group (e.g. tools, foods, clothing), the socially shared resources of the group (e.g. the language, religion, rules of social conduct) and the subjective resources that are used by individual group members (e.g. the values, attitudes, beliefs and practices which group members commonly use as a frame of reference for making sense of and relating to the world). The culture of the group is a composite formed from all three aspects – it consists of a network of material, social and subjective resources." (p. 19) However, cultural groups are internally heterogeneous. Cultures and norms are disputed, and change over time. Individual members in a cultural group make their choices in adopting certain subjects of cultural resources and rejecting others.

Any social group can have its distinctive culture. These groups include nations, ethnic or religious groups, cities, neighborhoods, work organizations, occupational, LGBT community, disability or generational groups, and families. Societies are therefore culturally diverse, individuals who simultaneously belong to different social groups and participate in different, individually unique, constellations of cultures. Within a cultural group, individuals differ in cultural positioning, which is why cultural resources are disputed within cultural groups.

In any situation in which people interact with each other, they may perceive differences in culture in the other person or group, so "every interpersonal situation is potentially an intercultural situation" (p. 20). Our frame of reference may therefore shift from the individual and interpersonal to the intercultural, which means we perceive others as members of a social group rather than as individuals. Such intercultural situations may arise when we meet people from different countries or ethnic groups, of different faith, gender, sexual orientation or social class, or we notice differences in education. Intercultural dialogue has the potential to build bridges between cultural groups, provided it is enacted as "'an open exchange of views, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect, between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other.'" (p. 20 f.)

Intercultural dialogue is of utmost importance to strengthen the social cohesion in culturally diverse, democratic societies. However, if cultural groups perceive each other as enemies, for example because of armed conflict in the past, or one cultural group is perceived as enjoying privileges at the expense of the other, intercultural dialogue may prove very difficult, requiring a high level of intercultural competence, empathy, personal strength and courage (see p. 21).

7. The concept of competence and competences: (p. 23 ff.) In the model of competences for democratic culture, the concept of competences (in the plural) refers to an individual's "psychological resources" – values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or critical understanding. We may imagine these resources to resemble a big toolbox with a large variety of mental and psychological tools. Competence (in the singular) refers to the willingness and ability of a person to make use of these competences, or tools, as deemed adequate in a given situation, or to deal with a problem. The concept of competence stands for a "dynamic process" (p. 24) in which a person selects, activates, organizes and co-ordinates the psychological resources (competences) in a given situation, and monitors and adapts the deployment of competences depending on contingent conditions. Competences are used in clusters rather than separately. Competence and competences are invisible, and only accessible through theories and models. They are visible in a person's behavior, i.e. what someone does, thinks, says, or how a person interacts with others. Teachers may therefore assess their students' level of competence development by observing their behavior in democratic or intercultural situations. The manual on the competence model for democratic culture describes three examples to show how clusters of competences are mobilized in certain situations: intercultural dialogue, standing up against hate speech, and participation in political debate (see p. 24 f.).

8. In order to empower future citizens to participate in a culture of democracy at the macro level, children and youth need to learn and practice competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue at the micro level of society, in the school community (see p. 16). This requires that the school adopt Edu-

cation for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE) as a whole- school approach, which means teaching and learning about, through, and for democracy and human rights – democracy and human rights being a subject matter in class ("about"), a pedagogical guideline for the whole school ("through"), and preparation for participation through practical experience in school ("for"). For a fuller account on the three dimensions of EDC/HRE, see https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-1/unit-3/chapter-1/. Teachers and principals need to acquire competences for democratic culture and practice them in school to deliver role models for their students. Diversity in society is mirrored in the school community and in class, so that interpersonal dialogue between teachers and students, and among students, always includes the dimension of intercultural dialogue. Learning for democratic culture will not suffice to change the whole of society at the macro level for the better, but without competent citizens, it will be impossible.

## Linking lessons to the real world

Running a school is a demanding task for a principal, requiring that you have a clear idea of your institutional key objectives. There are good ways to link the different issues and small steps like pieces of a puzzle in one big picture. Having this big picture in mind will often help you to be prepared for surprises, mostly unwelcome, before they happen.

"Democratic participation for students should be limited to student councils and deal with activities in school, but not in the classroom. Lessons are too important for students to interfere with."

This view is common in schools, and people who argue this way expect that students simply to toe the line, obeying school rules and orders from the staff. But on the other hand, we expect students to prepare for their role as adult citizens in a democratic community. Do we really believe that learners will somehow develop into democratic citizens by themselves, simply by attending school for a number of years?

"Will I ever need this in my life? – in the real world out there? Why do I need it?" Questions like these point to the gap between the time students spend in class and outside of class. Students will not be satisfied by the argument that a lesson is useful because it has been set in the curriculum by the ministry, or because the teacher says so, or because it prepares them for the exams. Rather, these questions remind teachers what didactics are all about: They must be able to explain their choices of topics and learning objectives, keeping in mind that something becomes interesting if it is connected to real life and to what learners already know.

If you wish to discuss this topic with your teachers, these materials will support you:

Teachers can take small steps if they wish to respond to the students' learning needs, but they should take them: https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-1/chapter-2/lesson-7/

Teachers who wish to reflect about their didactic choices will find support here:https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-2/

Democratic citizenship can be learned in school through experience and reflection. Education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE), both as a topic in class and a whole school approach, shows many ways how to link lesson topics to the real world, and particularly to life in school. EDC/HRE suggests different paths to suit different teaching styles. For teachers who prefer teacher-centred courses, EDC/HRE offers exercises on topics and examples related to the students' experience. Teachers interested in models of cooperative and task-based learning will find abundant material in the EDC/HRE manuals (https://www.living-democracy.com/teachers/).

**LiViNG DEMOCRACY**

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*Learning*

## Assessing is much more than testing and controlling

Assessment seems like the end of a race. Evaluation seems like the heartbeat of a living body. Their use can make your role as a principal a nightmare or it can offer you a handy tool. As almost everything at school, it is an issue that needs serious attention long before the final exams.

### Testing is not assessing

The teacher enters the class. He/she presents an issue, underlines the important parts and factors, explains what he/she thinks that needs to be explained, and gives one or two examples. The learner listens and follows the teacher's pace. He/she goes home, finds the issue in the text book, reads about the issue, underlines the important parts, remembers the explanation, and solves one or two exercises.During next lesson, the teacher asks the learner to repeat part of the given issue. At the end, he/she formulates questions about items of the whole sequence and expects them to be answered in written form.Someone gives me something, I deal with it, I give it back. The giver checks it for accuracy. According to the parts missing, he/she subtracts the equivalent marks.

This is a summative assessment, focusing on learning achievements, which we all know from testing and grading. This type of assessment is demanded in our school systems to award degrees. It is also a means of control, but not of evaluation, as it actually measures the effectiveness of teaching as a way to transform and impart information.

Testing and controlling have serious weaknesses. Assessment criteria are often either too vague, so they cannot deliver just measurements, or too strict, so they cannot account for the diversity of the learners' strengths and weaknesses. If we also consider the subjectivity of the person who judges the students' performance, then the same achievement may receive totally different grades, and their feedback for the learner will be almost useless.

### Formative and prognostic assessment.

Not only in EDC/HRE, but in good teaching in general, assessment also looks at the individual learners and their processes of learning (formative assessment) and what outcomes may be expected (prognostic assessment). These forms of assessment reflect the learners' personalities and their specific strengths and learning needs.

Assessment criteria are tools to analyze the individual learners' mistakes, rather than to correct them. The teachers discuss with the students how to overcome their difficulties, and the students take responsibility for their progress in learning. In this way, formative and prognostic assessment connect teaching and learning to democratic values, enabling and encouraging learners to participate in democracy, and to be successful in their more advanced studies.

For a more detailed account on summative, formative and prognostic assessment, see https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-5/chapter-2/lesson-3/.

### Sharing assessment criteria with students

Assessment should therefore be part of the democratic ethos of a school. It follows that in a summative assessment, the criteria need to be fair and clear, and they must be transparent for the learners. This does not only serve education for democratic citizenship and human rights, but it is also a precondition of good teaching – in all subjects. Moreover, you and your staff must discuss, and agree on, the scope of assessment. For example, does it focus solely on knowledge and skills, or does it also include attitudes and values?

### Self-assessment of teachers

Teachers cannot escape from their individual perspectives and how these affect the assessment of their students. Thus, they need to be aware that differences in assessment from one teacher to another may be unfair for the individual learner. Teachers should permanently reflect on their assessment procedures, which can be accomplished through peer surveillance and mutual feedback. Another method is listening to feedback by

students. A third approach is self-assessment. The first volume of the EDC/HRE manuals for teachers, *Educating for democracy*, contains a complete chapter on the assessment of students, teachers and schools, https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-5/, and also includes a checklist for teachers' self assessment: https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-5/chapter-2/lesson-8/

## Knowing and understanding the different kinds of diversity at school

Diversity among your students is a big challenge for your school. If this issue is not addressed adequately, it may affect students' achievements and their social status in adult life. To provide every student with an equal chance for success in school means to understanding each student's learning needs and responding to them individually. Fairness in education does not mean giving everyone the same, but providing everyone with what they need.

But how can you, as a principal, deal with diversity in your school without specialized staff and no time to find out about it? One way is to deal with each case when it comes to your office. Another way is to prepare the educational staff to be sensitive to diversity.

When we speak about diversity at school, we usually mean cultural differences between students. It is widely assumed that diversity primarily affects schools with a multicultural background among students.

This assumption has been proved wrong. Research has shown that usually there are more differences between students that are labelled with the "same" cultural identities rather than "different" ones. School diversity is not mainly a matter of culture or ethnicity. Within each cultural or ethnic group of students, we will find high and low performers and students with different learning needs.

To deal with this kind of diversity at school, the staff needs to be aware of, and open-minded to the learners' diversity of characters, learning styles, gender, age groups, developmental needs etc.

Although it seems highly desirable to know every single student's specific learning profile, but it is not feasible. Schools have no specialized staff, and teachers and principals lack the time to find out. But the school culture must encourage openness to diversity, so that teachers may take diversity in their classes into consideration when planning and teaching their lessons and evaluating their students.
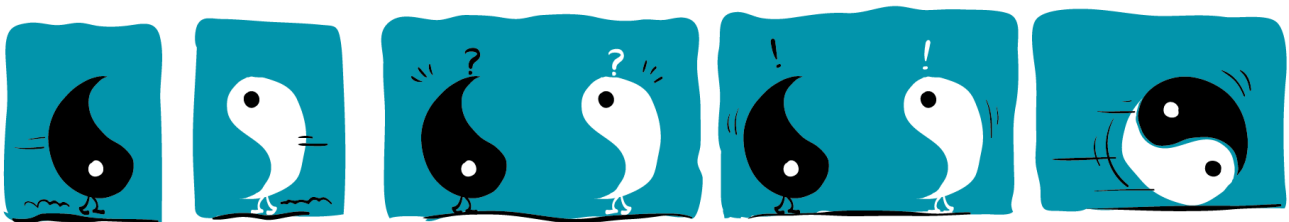
| Learning |
| --- |

## The school as a learning community

### Activity 1

**This is what I like**

Based on Living Democracy volume II, *Growing up in democracy,* pp. 18, 113;

https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/unit-1/lesson-1/

https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/students-manual-10/student-handout-1/student-handout-2/

This exercise may be used in an in-school training session for the whole staff or smaller groups of teachers. The debriefing may raise questions or suggestions for further topics in in-service training for teachers. If more than 30 teachers are taking part, we suggest creating sub-groups that share their results in a subsequent plenary session.

| Learning objectives | The teachers discover their mutual abilities and knowledge about teaching. |
| --- | --- |
| Tasks | The teachers describe their own preferences and choices in teaching in four categories.<br>They share their answers with other teachers and reflect on them. |
| Resources | Paper and pens, printed copies of the worksheet ("What I like and what I do in teaching") |
| Methods | Individual and group work, plenary discussion |

1. The group is introduced to the question: What different teaching styles do I know?
2. After a first brainstorming and a quick collection of answers, the group members are given the work sheet. They work on it in two steps:
   - Using the upper half of the worksheet, they note their answers under the four categories.
   - Then, they walk around, discussing their preferences and choices with five colleagues and write their answers on the lower half of the worksheet.
3. In the plenary meeting, the teachers sit in a circle. Their debriefing can be guided by the following questions:
   - What do you think of your colleagues' answers? Were you surprised?
   - Do you see any common ideas in the things that your colleagues like doing, but don't do?
   - What happens if someone doesn't know about the things you like doing and do?
   - What happens if someone doesn't know about the things you don't like doing but do?
   - What is the possible practical outcome of this activity?

## Activity 2

**Taking steps towards school as a learning community**

Volume I of the series of manuals for teachers in EDC/HRE, *Educating for democracy*, pp. 85 - 94, includes a chapter *Guiding processes of learning and choosing forms of teaching*. It is a handy theoretical and practical tool for those who want to develop school as a learning community. Work file 3 (p. 91), Selecting adequate forms of teaching and learning, contains key questions on this issue: https://www.living-democracy.com/text-books/volume-1/part-2/unit-4/chapter-2/lesson-3/

The teachers each receive a copy of work file 3.

1. Individual work. Each teacher studies the worksheet and selects three questions that seem particularly interesting to her/him.
2. Group work. The teachers share their results and agree on three questions.
3. Group work. In answering the questions they have chosen, the teachers create a poster with two precise proposals how to improve the quality of teaching and learning in school as a learning community.

# LiViNG DEMOCRACY

## Worksheet

| What I like and what I do in teaching | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | I like doing and do | I do but don't like doing | I don't like doing and don't do | I don't do but would like to do |
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | |
| 4 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | |

| What I like and what I do in teaching | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | I like doing and do | I do but don't like doing | I don't like doing and don't do | I don't do but would like to do |
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | |
| 4 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | |

*Learning*

## The culture of learning

| Learning objectives | To work on the definition of learning and link it to learning about democracy at school |
|---|---|
| **Tasks** | Teachers come to a common definition of learning and apply it in and out of the classroom |
| **Resources** | Paper and pen, worksheet |
| **Methods** | Individual work, Group work, plenary discussion |

Variety is good, but it is better in synthesis. It is crucial to agree to a common definition of learning. It is even better to include in this, as many different aspects as we can. You and your staff are different persons, as we all have the right to be. So, in order to use this right for the democratic benefit of school, we need to come to a common accepted, rich and feasible definition on learning.

In Living Democracy, Vol. IV, *Taking part in democracy*, pp. 162-164, https://www.living-democracy.com/text-books/volume-4/part-2/unit-6/lesson-1/

Lesson 1, *"Our most urgent problem is …"*, is a discussion on political agenda setting. You may use the "Wall of silence" method described there, rephrasing the key question, "In my opinion, learning is" and modify the chart on page 163 accordingly. This method is suitable for up to 25 or 30 participants, so if more teachers are taking part, divide them into subgroups.

The research task on page 164 could also serve to form groups that have the same, or similar interests in certain aspects of learning. In this way, you may initiate a cooperation between members of your staff.

**LIVING DEMOCRACY**

*Learning*

## The Council of Europe's model of competences for democratic culture (CDC)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Learning Objectives** | 1. The teachers are familiar with the competence model for democratic cuture. <br> 2. They are aware that democratic culture and intercultural dialogue are closely linked and they are key objectives in Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC). <br> 3. They understand that education in schools is the key for students to acquire the competences they need to participate in democratic culture, both in school and in adult life. |
| **Tasks** | 1. The teachers study the diagram and notes on the CDC model. They read selected chapters from the CDC manual, present them to each other and discuss them. <br> 2. The teachers take stock of education for democratic citizenship and human rights as a whole -school approach, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. <br> 3. Together with the principal and deputy principals, they discuss an agenda for school development and identify their needs in terms of learning and training. |
| **Resources** | One copy for every participant: Council of Europe, *Competences for democratic culture* (manual). <br> „*Competences for democratic culture: a diagram*" |
| **Methods** | Group work (jigsaw puzzle method) <br> Discussion |
| **Comments** | It is essential that teachers understand why and for what purpose they should engage in developing their school as a democratic school community. We therefore suggest an internal in-service training day for the whole school staff, including the principal and deputies. <br> The principal can delegate the responsibility for preparing and chairing the training day to a team of teachers. In this case, the principal and the deputy principal(s) can participate in the training. <br> The jigsaw puzzle method gives the teachers the opportunity to explain the competence model to each other (task- based learning), so no lecturer is required. Each participant takes responsibility for explaining one aspect of the CDC model to his or her peers and receives input from them on other points. <br> This training day can be a kick-off for further discussions, training events, or concrete measures. We advise the principal to agree on concrete steps with the staff at the end of the day. |

### A schedule for an internal in-service training day on the model of competences for democratic culture (CDC)

**1. Introduction (plenary session); approx. 20 minutes**

- Purpose and objectives of the training day
- Schedule and time frame for phases 1 – 3 (this is important to ensure that the training can be completed in the available time); visualization (power point or handouts for the participants) helps to save time.
- Technical matters (e.g. materials) and organization
- The teachers are assigned to study groups of 6; the groups and their locations are listed on a flipchart.

**2. The Teachers study and explain the CDC model to each other (group work, jigsaw puzzle method)**

**Phase 2.1: Assigning tasks in the discussion groups (Nos A – G); approx. 30 minutes**

- The first 36 teachers enter groups of six members each, numbered A – G. If 72 or more participants are present, they form a second network of six groups, numbered H - N. To adapt to the number of participants, the study groups can be extended to eight participants.
- The groups study the diagram with the notes on the CDC model and the "butterfly" diagram on Competences in *Competences for democratic culture*, p. 11.
- The groups assign the following tasks, numbered 1 – 6, to their members:
  1. Explain the concept of culture (note 6, *Competences for democratic culture*, chapter 3). Give an example of intercultural dialogue at your school.
  2. Explain the concept of competence and competences (note 7, *Competences for democratic culture*, chapter 4). Think of an example to show how clusters of competences are mobilized in a certain situation.
  3. Explain the importance of values in the competence model (*Competences for democratic culture*, chapter 6, pp. 36 ff.) Choose an example to show the importance of values for democratic culture and the school community.
  4. Explain the importance of attitudes in the competence model (*Competences for democratic culture*, chapter 6, pp. 39 ff.) Choose an example to show the importance of attitudes for democratic culture and the school community.
  5. Explain the importance of skills in the competence model (*Competences for democratic culture*, chapter 6, pp. 44 ff.) Choose an example to show the importance of skills for democratic culture and the school community.
  6. Explain the importance of knowledge and critical understanding in the competence model (*Competences for democratic culture*, chapter 6, pp. 51 ff.) Choose an example to show the importance of knowledge and understanding for democratic culture and the school community.
  7. If more than 6 group members are present, a task is assigned to 2 group members who will work as a pair.

**Phase 2.2: Preparation in study groups (Nos 1 – 6); approx. 45 – 60 minutes**

- The participants enter a study group numbered 1 – 6. In group 1, the six participants who have taken task 1 meet to prepare their explanations. The other study groups focus on task 2 – 6 in the same way.
- The participants study the materials assigned to them. They clarify points that may prove difficult and prepare their input for their discussion groups. Their task is to inform, not to judge or discuss.
- All participants have teaching experience, so they will understand that their input must be kept short and simple, for two reasons: first, the available time must be shared equally for six inputs; second, the attention span of every learner is limited.

**Phase 2.3: Presentations in the discussion groups (Nos A – G); approx. 60 – 75 minutes**

- The participants return to their discussion groups.
- In turn, they explain the aspect of the CDC model that they have selected. They observe the available time to ensure that every member can be heard.
- If time allows, the participants share their thoughts and impressions of the CDC model.

**3. Debriefing in the plenary round; approx. 60 – 75 minutes**

- The participants assemble for a plenary meeting.
- The participants give their *personal* feedback: what I found interesting or unimportant; what I would like to know more about; what I learned about my competences etc. These statements are not commented on or discussed before the feedback round is completed. Then, comments and discussion can follow.
- The participants discuss further steps of planning or action, such as the following:
  - Assessment: democratic culture in our school community: potentials, strengths, weaknesses
  - What contribution can I make, e.g. as a role model for interpersonal and intercultural dialogue?

- What contribution can I make in my teaching?
- What are our objectives in teaching to support democratic culture?
- What would we like to learn and receive training for?

The principal listens to the teachers' requests and suggestions and then responds. Before the meeting is closed, the principal and staff should have agreed on the next step, or steps, that they will take together.

**LIVING DEMOCRACY**

| *Learning* |
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## Teaching as a whole-school approach

Teaching together (Living Democracy Vol. I, *Educating for democracy*, pp. 110 f. https://www.living-democracy. com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-5/chapter-2/lesson-10/ )

Apart from team teaching, teachers are alone in their classes. Over time they may develop blind spots in their interaction with students, and these can only be detected by peer supervision. A teacher may need support in doing his job. Student feedback is always helpful, but feedback by peers has a different quality, as peers adopt a professional perspective on an equal eye level. For this reason, teachers frequently shy away from opening their classes to peer visitors. The following guideline may help to encourage teachers to give peer supervision a try (see Living Democracy Vol. I, *Educating for democracy*, p. 111 https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-5/chapter-2/lesson-11/)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Size of the team:** | Three teachers form a team for peer feedback. |
| **Organization:** | The teachers visit each other twice in class during the school year, so each teacher is visited twice by two peers and attends four lessons as observer.<br><br>The teams are responsible for planning their visits, taking their timetables and schedules into account.<br><br>After the lesson, the teacher shares his view of the lesson, and the visiting teachers give feedback. |
| **Subject relevance:** | Teachers observe each other's EDC/HRE lessons. It is not necessary that they teach the subject themselves. |
| **Composition of group:** | Sympathy and trust are important when forming teams for peer supervision. It should be clear that what peers see in class is confidential. |
| **Principal's task:** | The principal's role is to keep track of the minimum number of visits within a team. The principal should not get involved in discussions about teaching issues. |
| **Thematic focus:** | The questions that can be the focus points of these peer visits can arise out of different interests or relations: a) a teacher wishes to receive feedback on a certain question, b) a new curriculum, method or activity has been introduced and should be evaluated or c) pedagogical principles (for example, formulated in the school's program or profile) should be evaluated. |

## LiViNG DEMOCRACY

*Learning*

### How can people live together?

| Learning objectives | To consider the role of education in training competences for intercultural dialogue (see handout *„Competences for democratic culture: a diagram"*) |
| --- | --- |
| Tasks | Group activity using *The school at the edge of the forest* |
| Resources | EDC/HRE Vol. III, *Living in Democracy*, p. 80 https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-3/part-1/unit-3/student-handout-5/ |
| Methods | Role play, discussion, hypothesizing, critical thinking |

See the description of the lesson in EDC/HRE Vol. III, *Living in Democracy*, pp. 66 – 68. https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-3/part-1/unit-3/lesson-1/

*Learning*

## Linking learning to the real world: Checking my teaching objectives

For learning to be meaningful, learners must be able to link their learning outcomes to their experience and interests in real life. It is therefore essential for teachers to check their objectives if they intend to connect their teaching to the real world.

- Introduction to the task, its purpose and focus
- Teachers with the same or affiliated subjects form groups.
- Distribute worksheet
- Allow time for the group members to fill in the list.
- Group members discuss their answers.
- According to their importance, they prioritize the questions, ranking them by numbers in each line.
- Groups present their first three priorities.
- Debriefing, guided by the following questions:
  - Do we agree on our priorities?
  - Why are lesson objectives crucial for linking a lesson to the real world?
  - How feasible is such a list in our school?
  - What are the main obstacles in applying such a list to our everyday teaching practice?
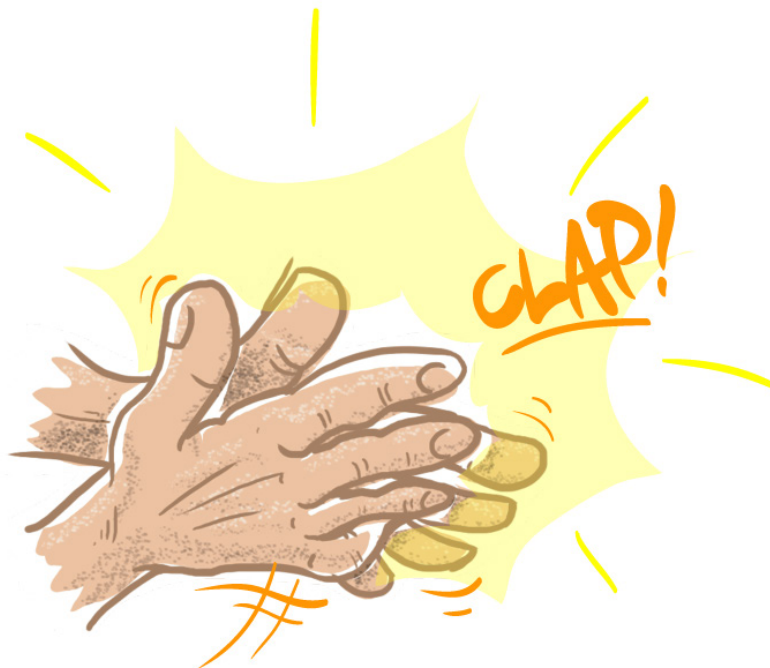
## Worksheet

From Living Democracy Vol. I, *Educating for democracy*, Task and key questions, pages 67 – 68: https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-2/chapter-2/

| | |
|---|---|
| What objectives do I wish to achieve? | |
| What competences will be most important at the end of the unit? | |
| What reasons do I give for the selection of these objectives? | |
| What priority do I give to my objectives (primary and secondary objectives)? | |
| What objectives are important now – for the class as a whole, for individual students, male and/or female? | |
| Have I ensured that the objectives that I have selected serve the main interests and needs of my students? | |
| Do my lessons really respond to what my students are preoccupied with? | |
| Is it possible for the students to participate in the definition or selection of the learning objectives? | |
| How much time (lessons and weeks) has been assigned to achieving the objectives? | |
| What objectives should be achieved by all the students within the disposable teaching time (general standard of attainment)? | |
| Are specific levels of attainment to be defined for individual students (education according to individual ability)? | |
| Have I enabled the students to move forward from knowledge to action, that is, can they confidently apply the knowledge they have acquired? | |
| What do I focus on in my teaching – cognitive, personal or social competence? | |
| Do I have a clear idea of the short- and long-term objectives which are of primary importance for my class, for learning groups, for individual male and female students? | |
| Have I clearly and explicitly stated the objectives? | |

*Learning*

## Assessing and evaluating vs. testing and controlling

**Standards of reference**

- Ask teachers to bring with them a random student's assessment (marks, test etc)
- The teachers form groups. Distribute Worksheet 1.
- The teachers study the worksheet (individual work).
- In the groups, they compare which standards of reference they usually take into consideration and which they do not use.
- They discuss the feasibility and value of assessing by the criteria presented in Worksheet 1.
- Distribute Worksheet 2.
- The group members answer the questionnaire.
- They check their assessment using Worksheet 2
- Debriefing about strong and weak points in assessment

## Worksheet 1

(based on Living Democracy, Vol. I, *Educating for democracy*, p. 103)
https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-5/chapter-2/lesson-4/

There are three different basic standards of reference for the assessment and marking of students' performance:

1. Individual criterion: the student's present performance is compared with his or her previous work.
2. Objective criterion: the student's performance is compared with the learning objectives that have been defined.
3. Social criterion: a student's performance is compared with that of the students within the same class or the same age group.

(For more information about the above-mentioned criteria, Living Democracy, Vol. I, *Educating for democracy,* p. 104) https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-5/chapter-2/lesson-5/

| Type of criterion | Individual criterion | Objective criterion | Social criterion |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reference figure** | Learning progress | Learning objective | Normal curve of distribution, arithmetic average, deviation |
| **Information** | How much has been learned between time 1 and time 2? | To what extent has the student approached the learning objective? | How big is the deviation of the individual progress from the average? |
| **Type of assessment** | Tests, verbal assessment, learning progress report, structured form of observation | Goal-oriented test, learning progress report, structured form of observation | Test including a grade oriented on the average of the class |
| **Pedagogical implication** | Very high | Very high | Is often used for selection; is not important for orientation towards support for students |

## Worksheet 2

(based on Living Democracy, Vol. I, *Educating for democracy*, p. 105)
https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-5/chapter-2/lesson-6/

**Questions for self-evaluation**

Learning process of the students:

| | |
|---|---|
| – How do I ensure that the students have achieved the objectives? | |
| – Did the students regularly experience success while they were learning? | |
| – Are they aware of the progress they have made? | |
| – Does my teaching give boys and girls an equal chance of success? | |
| – Do the students consciously watch, control and improve their learning and working behavior? | |
| – Were the students given any guidelines to assist them while learning? | |
| – Can the students control and assess their learning behavior and their results themselves? | |
| – In their self-assessment, do the students also refer to their own objectives, standards, criteria or needs? | |
| – Do I perceive individual students' progress? | |
| – How do I identify learning problems of individual students? | |
| – How do I observe social interaction in the class? | |
| – How do I keep a record of my observations and assessments of individual students and the class as a whole? | |
| – ... | |

**Some questions about the teacher's learning process:**

| | |
|---|---|
| – How, when and with whom do I reflect on my teaching? | |
| – How do I let my students participate? | |
| – How do I relate my students' success or failure to my teaching? | |
| – How do I recognize my progress in teaching, and how do I learn as a teacher? | |

*Learning*

**Value-based teaching and learning as prevention of behavior problems at school**

## Activity 1

**A principal's personal checklist on values and school**

(based on E. Bäckman/B. Trafford (2007) *Democratic governance of schools*, Key Area 2: **Value based Education – Informal contexts**, p. 47).

"A homogeneous society with common values is a thing of the past, if it ever has existed. Historically, public schooling has always been a tool for those in power to impress certain values on their subjects. This is still the case but, in a democratic society, the values we want to transfer to the younger generation are established and maintained openly and in democratic processes."

*Democratic governance of schools,* p. 42



Good intentions in written documents are of little value if school leaders and staff do not demonstrate often and in everyday situations, that the formal declarations really tell the truth.

| **Personal outlook** | |
|---|---|
| *Step 1:*<br>Your personal values are not relevant. You put your faith in the authorities above you. Values are not a priority, except perhaps stability, order and obedience. | *Try this:*<br>Ask yourself: what are my incentives? What kind of school do I want? What kind of society? What values do I want to transfer to my students? (Or you could simply ask yourself: why do I want to be a school leader?) |
| *Step 2:*<br>You are clear about what you want in terms of values that ought to be evident in teaching and daily life at school. You have also started to spread your thoughts to people around you. | *Try this:*<br>Raise your ambitions: you want the whole school to embrace the same values, so you spend time and energy on spreading the message. You also involve students in formal and informal talks on democracy, human rights and respect for all. As always, encourage good initiatives. |
| *Step 3:*<br>You truly enjoy new aspects on life, as reflected in the behavior and values of all the different sections of society that are represented in your school. Your personal engagement is a source of inspiration for students and staff. | *Try this:*<br>Make everybody understand the power of good examples. Teachers and other adults at school must be made deeply aware of their function as role models, and older students should know that they serve the same purpose for the younger ones. |

*Learning*

## Teaching as a factor of democracy

| Learning objectives | Teachers become aware of attitudes and practices related to diversity and, accept each other as part of a group.<br>They become aware of diversity among students in their school by observing their behavior during breaks.<br>They reflect upon the data they have gathered and analyze them.<br>They link perspectives of qualitative and quantitative research. |
|---|---|
| Tasks | Teachers arrive at a common definition of learning and apply it within and outside the classroom.<br>They research their school conditions outside of class.<br>They work with statistics and present their results. |
| Resources | Paper and pen, worksheets |
| Methods | Individual work, group work, plenary discussion |

Science teachers often find it difficult to imagine living beings behind figures and data. Conversely, arts teachers have difficulties working with abstract figures that stand for living beings. In both cases, there is a gap between the learning outcomes that these teachers expect and real life as students experience it. This research project on life in the school community helps to bridge the gap between the perspectives of qualitative and quantitative research.

The relevance of the topic of this research project is closely linked to educating for democracy and human rights: Our societies are culturally diverse, and cultural groups form majorities and minorities. This structure is mirrored in the diverse identities of students in the school community. When students interact with each other, interpersonal interaction also carries an intercultural dimension, for example between boys and girls, but also across gender groups. Intercultural interaction and dialogue are essential for a democratic school community.

In Living Democracy, Vol. II, *Growing up in democracy*, pp. 36 – 40, lessons 1 – 3 focus on interpersonal and intercultural interaction and dialogue in the school community. The lessons are designed for students. Don't change a thing, just use them on the teachers' level of understanding and reflection. Don't omit lessons 2 and 3. They contain a guideline for a process of qualitative and quantitative research, and they show a fine connection of life inside and outside the classroom.

https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/unit-3/lesson-1/

https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/unit-3/lesson-2/

https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/unit-3/lesson-3/

https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/students-manual-10/student-handout-1/student-handout-11/

https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/students-manual-10/student-handout-1/student-handout-12/

For intercultural dialogue as an inherent element in democratic culture, both in school and society as a whole, see the handout *„Competences for democratic culture: a diagram"* and/or *Competences for democratic culture*, pp. 19 ff.

LIVING DEMOCRACY

## Knowing and understanding diversity at school

**Take a step forward** (Compass activity, modified for teachers and educators)
https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/take-a-step-forward

| | |
|---|---|
| **Learning objectives** | To increase awareness and knowledge of diversity in the classroom and raise awareness about the inequality of opportunities in the school community. |
| **Tasks** | Teachers in a students' role take one step forward every time they agree with a statement. |
| **Resources** | Open space (hall, foyer, outdoors), role cards, music |
| **Methods** | Role play, discussion |

- Create a calm atmosphere with some soft background music. Alternatively, ask the participants for silence.
- Hand out the role cards at random, one to each participant. Tell them to keep it to themselves and not to show it to anyone else.
- Invite them to sit down (preferably on the floor) and to read their role card.
- Now ask them to begin to get into role. To help, read out some of the following questions, pausing after each one, to give people time to reflect and build up a picture of themselves and their lives: What was your childhood like? What sort of house did you live in? What kind of games did you play? What sort of work did your parents do?
- Let's follow a school day: I wake up in my house……. All day ……. Last thing before I sleep is to think about my future, my hopes, my fears…
- Now ask people to remain absolutely silent as they line up beside each other (like on a starting line).
- Tell the participants that you are going to read out a list of situations or events. Every time that they can answer "yes" to the statement, they should take a step forward. Otherwise, they should stay where they are and not move.
- Read out the situations one at a time. Pause for a while between each statement to allow people time to step forward and to look around to take note of their positions relative to each other.
- At the end, invite everyone to take note of their final positions. Then give them a couple of minutes to come out of their role before debriefing in plenary.
- Debriefing can be guided by the following questions:
  - How did people feel about stepping forward – or not?
  - For those who stepped forward often, at what point did they begin to notice that others were not moving as fast as they were?
  - Did anyone feel that there were moments when their basic human rights were being ignored?
  - How easy or difficult was it to play the different roles?
  - How did they imagine what the person they were playing was like?
  - Can people guess each other's roles? (Let people reveal their roles during this part of the discussion)
  - Does the exercise mirror school society in some way? How?
  - What first steps could be taken to address the inequalities in the school community?

**Tips for facilitators**

If you do this activity outdoors, make sure that the participants can hear you, especially if you are doing it with a large group! You may need to use your co-facilitators to relay the statements.

In the imagining phase at the beginning, it is possible that some participants may say that they know little about the life of the person they have to impersonate. Tell them, this does not really matter, and that they should use their imagination and to act it out as best they can.

The power of this activity lies in the impact of actually seeing the distance increasing between the participants, especially at the end when there should be a big distance between those that stepped forward often and those who did not. To enhance the impact, it is important that you adjust the roles to reflect the realities of the participants' own lives. In so doing, be sure you adapt the roles so that only a minimum of people can take steps forward (i.e. can answer "yes"). This also applies if you have a large group and need more roles.

During the debriefing and evaluation, it is important to explore how the participants knew about the character whose role they had to play. Was it through personal experience or through other sources of information (news, books, and jokes)? How sure are they that the information and images they have of the characters are reliable? This way you can also introduce how stereotypes and prejudice work.
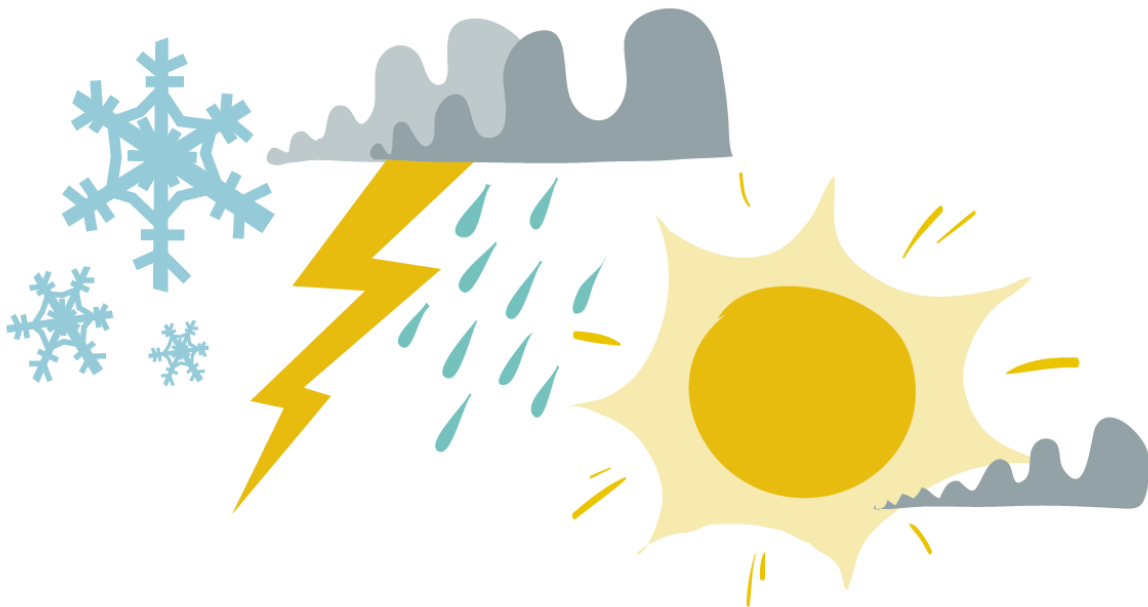
## Worksheet

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| You are the daughter of the Math teacher at your school | Some of the teachers are clients at your mother's hairdressers shop |
| Your father is a priest | You are a daughter of Filipino immigrants |
| You have come to the country from India, seven years ago | Your parents are architects |
| Your father, a doctor, would like you to become a doctor as well | Your parents are workers at a clothes factory |
| You are the first of 5 children in the family. Your father works at the local municipality | Your parents are conservatively religious |
| You are the daughter of a financial immigrant from Pakistan | Your father owns a big shoe shop |
| Your parents have been unemployed for the last six months | Your parents are separated, they are in court, fighting for your custody |
| You are the son of a single parent family | Your parents have been divorced for 6 years now. Your mother is a history teacher |
| Your family has come from the United States. You have been living here for one year now | You are a Roma girl. You live in a camp, 20 minutes away from school |
| You are the daughter of an employee of the German embassy in the country | You are handicapped. You get around in move on a wheel chair |
| You are the first son of a Jewish family | Your father works in a factory, your mother is not working |

*Learning*

## At the beginning or at the end: My personal educational history

This activity can work as the first activity of the whole series presented here, or as a concluding one, at the end of the series. The only thing that does changes the debriefing which occurs either as a starting or a closing discussion of Action.

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| **Learning objectives** | To identify personal links, pros and cons about education |
| **Tasks** | Teachers explore, identify and discuss how they have learned throughout their lives, what they keep learning, what their interests and their special skills are, etc. |
| **Resources** | Worksheet from Living Democracy, Vol. I, page 60 |
| **Methods** | Individual work, plenary discussion |

- Distribute a personal copy of the worksheet to every teacher.
- Provide a time frame of several days for the teachers to work with it individually and set a date for a general discussion.
- At the set date and time, the teachers meet to share and discuss their findings. They can either first work in groups and then meet in the plenary meeting, or begin to discuss their findings in a plenary meeting. The following points may be raised:
  - Learning and training needs, e.g. academic expertise, teaching methods, understanding processes of learning
  - Comparing and discussing the teaching guidelines that teachers adhere to
  - Measures to reduce stress and improve efficiency in daily work
  - Discussing the significance of learning and teaching and the connection to school life as a whole.

Depending on the context, this session serves to plan further action, by drawing on the materials in this sequence, or evaluating the actions taken so far, and to considering further steps.

## Worksheet (from Living Democracy, Vol. I, *Educating for democracy,* p. 60)

https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/part-2/unit-1/chapter-2/lesson-2-2/

**How to take my teaching skills and knowledge into account**

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| • **What general experience, skills and knowledge do I have?** |
| • **To what extent is my knowledge incomplete – referring to subject matter content, objectives, suitable teaching methods and the processes of learning?** |
| • **In which fields do I wish to further educate myself (general knowledge, teaching methods, professional skills, personal qualities, routine, etc.)?** |
| • **Which concept of human nature serves as my general guideline?** |
| • **What is the theoretical framework, or the simplified version of a theory, that guides my work as a teacher?** |
| • **How would I describe and classify my relationship to my students?** |
| • **Where are my personal limits concerning working hours, stress, etc.? How do I make use of my personal working capacity?** |
| • **How can I reduce my workload by better planning in terms of my work and other activities?** |
| • **How do I use and maximize my time budget, how do I deal with sources of personal stress?** |