

Learning
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.