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GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATION LEADERS AND INNOVATORS

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INTRODUCTION: GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATION LEADERS AND INNOVATORS

The real role of leadership in education is not, and should not be, 'command and control'; the real role of leadership is 'climate control'.

Ken Robinson (2013)

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

To lead an educational institution could be described as a role of great privilege and great responsibility – to shape and nurture the most precious resources on the planet – the human spirit and ingenuity. To bring out the best in humanity, institutions of learning must strive to be moral, empowering and creative. The CANDIICE project starts from the assertion that education has a unique and important responsibility for the future of democracy. Educating for the survival and improvement of democracy is our best, and only, way to support progress towards just and equitable societies. Universal education must be a process of empowering and equipping young citizens – it must also be a 'critical friend' to the democratic institutions that prevail in the surrounding society. In other words, each education system should instil in all learners:

- **an understanding of democracy,**

- **a commitment to promote, defend and improve democracy for future generations and**

- **the skills to work with others to address the weaknesses and failings of current democracy as communities become more diverse.**

These require more than an inculcation of knowledge of civic responsibilities and electoral systems. They require educational environments in which learners experience democratic principles in their day-to-day interactions and see that these principles are respected, modelled and articulated by their educators.

In this guide, we suggest ways that people with educational leadership roles can take a holistic view of the educational experiences of their learners and consider practical steps to build a whole-institution ethos that actively contributes to a fair and inclusive democratic future.

INCLUSION

According to Glaeser et al. (2007) "In the battle between democracy and dictatorship, democracy has a wide potential base of support but offers weak incentives to its defenders. Dictatorship provides stronger incentives to a narrower base".

This succinct comparison explains why democracy needs to be inclusive to be sustainable. Implicit to this statement is the recognition that the wider the base of participants in any democracy, the stronger it will be in resisting moves towards authoritarianism or dictatorship. The wider the base, the stronger the support. It follows that, as societies become more diverse, the preservation of inclusive democratic processes <u>for all</u> requires renewed efforts to ensure that 'marginal' members of the community are supported and equipped to exercise their democratic rights and find ways to participate – and thus join the group who have investment in the survival of open democracy. Failure to ensure that democracy engages some groups in the community increases the number of who consider themselves 'left out' and feel that their interests are not recognised – if this number grows, the path to power becomes easier for authoritarian populist politicians who capitalise on discontent.

Glaeser et al. (2007) investigate the relationship between levels of education in a country and the status of its democracy. They make clear, however, that beneficiaries of higher education are not automatically 'defenders of democracy'. "Mussolini enjoyed substantial support from students in the young fascist movement. Hitler likewise relied on the Nazi students, who eventually seized control of the universities. In Latin America, students offered strong support to the Che Guevara led communist guerrilla movement, no friends of democracy. The evidence that students organize to participate in collective action—democratic or anti-democratic—is much more compelling than the evidence of their preference for democracy."

It is therefore essential that, in our defence of democracy, we consider not just the need for universal education but question whether that education instils the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, understanding and competences to defend, sustain and improve democracy.

So what must educators do to rise the challenge and meet their responsibility to produce active democratic citizens?

- **A CLEAR VISION OF WHAT A DEMOCRATIC CITIZEN LOOKS LIKE**
  Education for democracy needs to strengthen the understanding and capacity of all learners to become 'defenders' of democracy as well as participants. The essential competences for democratic citizens are set out in detail in the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, vol. 1 (Council of Europe, 2018).

- **COORDINATION AND COHERENCE**
  Different modes of learning and curriculum models are needed to suit different learning settings, but whichever models are chosen, it is the responsibility of the education leaders to consider effectiveness, impact and coherence, so that learning outcomes favourable to

future democracy are the end result. A clear vision of how these learning outcomes are recognised, observed and assessed is necessary. Detailed guidance on this is also in the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.

- **INCLUSION**

  Education for democracy needs to involve all learners, not just an academic elite or a committed subsection who express interest in student council or equivalent activities. It is fundamental to the definition of democracy that all who are affected by political decisions have an equal chance to take part in the selection of those who make the decisions. It follows that the educational preparation for democratic citizenship must include all who will be citizens

- **PEDAGOGY: DIVERSE AND CREATIVE LEARNING METHODS**

  If education for democracy is an entitlement for all, it cannot be taught in a way that only engages and motivates a limited percentage of learners (or worse, is only seen as a topic for serious study by those who are entered for external examinations in civics or citizenship). It requires a wide range of learning experiences which appeal to many different styles of thinking and learning. This includes creative, imaginative artistic, kinaesthetic and neuro-diverse learning styles as well as 'academic' logical, rational and linear thinking styles.

- **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND FORMAL LESSONS**

  While it is essential that there is a coherent and sequenced curriculum programme for learning about democracy, practical learning of values, attitudes, skills including team collaboration, communication, decision-making, adaptability and resilience are also needed. These are gained through experiencing a varied diet of activities and projects: research, volunteering, campaigning, drama and arts presentations, service learning, off-site experiences and active involvement in charities and campaigns that relate to real world issues. Involvement in these should be monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure that all learners have some regular involvement – they should not be set as alternative practical options aimed mostly at the less academic learners.

- **STAFF ENGAGEMENT, SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

  Successful improvement of education for democracy requires a coordinated response supported by all the staff working with learners. Simple directives from leadership to impose new policy would be a contradiction of the democratic principles intended. A consultative and participatory process involving all staff may take time but will result in whole-institution understanding, greater commitment and sustainable development - resulting in a fully

embedded improvement of ethos. Clear and transparent communications from the outset of any institutional development should be a central feature of this development.

- **CONSPICUOUS COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC VALUES**

  "Anyone walking into the place can see that inclusion, democracy and consultation are central values". Public statements, mission statements, displays, official publications and online messages can all emphasise the importance of human rights and democratic principles. If these statements are clear to all, parents and community partners are less likely to question why all learners are encouraged to take part in active community projects alongside their traditional academic studies.

- **REAL DECISION MAKING**

  Involvement of learners at different levels of decision-making can be achieved through imaginative use of different consultative structures including:

  - Class discussion

  - Learner-led surveys

  - Digital consultation (Mentimeter / Google forms etc.)

  - Focus group interviews leading to reports

  - Surveys, questionnaires

  - Whole-school forum conferences

  - Inviting external mentors to work with research groups of learners to produce reports

  - Citizens Juries (representative cross-sections of the learner group asked to investigate a problem or recommend a development)

- **EVALUATION**

  A natural and necessary extension of participation in decision-making is involvement of learners in evaluation. Using any of the methods listed above, learners can bring their perspective to improve the evaluation of effectiveness of learning and teaching and the progress of the institution towards a fully democratic ethos

On the following pages we offer some detailed guidance on whole institution approaches to democratic education.

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Edward L. Glaser, A. M. Giacomo and A. Ponzetto, (2007), Why does democracy need education?, J Econ Growth (2007) 12:77–99, DOI 10.1007/s10887-007-9015-1, © Springer Science+Business Media, AVAILABLE AT: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10887-007-9015-1

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THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE (RFCDC) FOR EDUCATION LEADERS

The *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (CoE, 2018) has been designed to establish common goals for citizenship education across Europe. It is also intended to support Council of Europe member states in developing open, tolerant, equitable and diverse societies through their education systems.

The Framework is founded on the values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It is a tool for designing and developing pedagogies, methodologies and assessments suitable to develop competences for democratic culture.

The Framework is composed of three main volumes:

Volume one is about the model of 20 competences divided into values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical thinking. It also explains the background to the model and how it can be used. Volume two comprises targets and outcomes – observable behaviour to demonstrate each competence. These provide guidance for educators in designing learning situations, assessment processes and evaluation. Volume three advises on how the model of 20 competences may be used.

The 20 competences included in the competence model
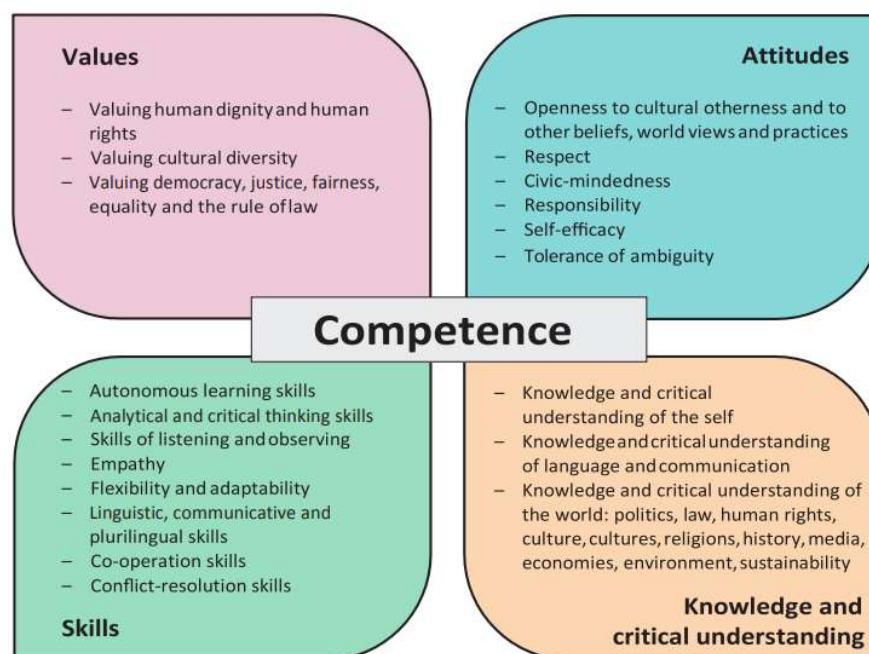
This framework suggests a combination of democratic experiences, pedagogies and methodologies which together contribute to building democratic and intercultural competence.

Apart from democratic environments in each classroom, manifested through learner-centred pedagogies, this framework suggests that learners can only have a 'lived experience' of democracy at a school which integrates democratic values and human rights principles into its governance and overall ethos. These principles will be reflected in all aspects of school life: curricula, teaching methods, leadership styles, decision-making, policies, codes of behaviour, staff-learner relationships, extracurricular activities and relationships with the community.

This can be simplified into three connected aspects:

- Learning and teaching,
- Governance and culture, and
- Cooperation with the community.

Learning and teaching

Competences for democratic culture should be incorporated into the school's curriculum as a new subject, into different subjects or as a cross-curricular theme. Classrooms must be safe places for open, participative and respectful interactions. There should be opportunities for learners to be making decisions about their own learning, be engaged in self-assessment, peer assessment and collaboration in group work. They should also be able to give opinions, explore values and generate questions. Teachers should find ways of collaborating in teams to include competences for democratic culture across the curriculum and generate learning and project opportunities focusing on issues that are topical and important to the learners themselves.

Governance and Culture

The school ethos should be safe and welcoming. The school should promote positive relations between staff and learners where everyone feels they have a part to play. Leadership and management should respect human rights, democratic principles, equal treatment, participatory decision making and transparent accountability. All stakeholders should be encouraged to play an active role in building the whole-school ethos through meetings, school-wide surveys and learners' representatives' feedback. There should be established structures and procedures for participative decision-making that include staff, learners and parents. School policies can be reviewed to ensure that they reflect values and principles of democratic citizenship and human rights. The whole school approach should mean that learners are encouraged to express their views on school matters as well as investigating wider, topical issues. Learners should participate in activities such as authentic decision-making through class discussion, student councils, surveys, representation in working parties, school assemblies, debating clubs.

Cooperation with the community

The Council of Europe Framework recommends collaboration and partnerships with parents, authorities, NGOs, universities, businesses, media, health workers and other schools so that these stakeholders may participate in a wider, open culture of democracy.

HOW DEMOCRATIC IS MY SCHOOL?

There is no right way to teach democracy unless we also practice it.

Eric Hoffer

What is democratic school governance/leadership?

One of many types of school leadership is called democratic school leadership. The principal goal of this is the development of school culture that is based on democratic values and practices. The development of democratic school leadership creates a learning environment for students and teachers to gain knowledge and develop skills needed for them to become active citizens in their communities (Pažur, Kovač, 2019.), but there is significant evidence that this style of leadership leads to sustainable academic success and improvement.

Bass and Bass (2008) considered democratic leadership to be oriented on employees, relationships and meeting the needs of all members; it is considerate, supportive, open, informal and warm. The fundamental characteristic in contrast to an authoritarian style is that it is oriented towards people. On the other hand, authoritarian leadership is oriented towards work, structure, tasks, punishment and is mostly formal and cold. Comparing the performance of these two types of leadership, Bass and Bass state that, in the long term, the positive effects of democratic leadership are clear, due to the development of employees' commitment, loyalty and involvement, which are all of utmost importance for productivity.

Woods (2005, 2007), the most cited author in this specific field, gives a very detailed definition of the goals of democratic school leadership. Central to these goals is the creation of a school culture with shared vision and values that are based on democratic ideals and practices. In such culture:

- dialogue is encouraged,
- people are aware of and take responsibility for the development of relationships,
- all members of the school have a stake in improving the school culture,
- all members of the school benefit from personal and professional growth.
- cultural and material inequalities are reduced and
- respect for diversity and social justice is promoted.

The Council of Europe (Bäckman and Trafford, 2007) defined the term "school governance" as a wide definition of school leadership, including both instrumental and ideological aspects. "Democratic" indicates that school governance is based on human rights values, empowerment and involvement of students, staff and stakeholders in all important decisions in the school.

Democratic school governance is beneficial because it:

- improves discipline

- enhances learning

- reduces conflict

- makes the school more successful and competitive

- secures the future existence of sustainable democracy in the wider society

Key areas for democratic school governance defined by the Council of Europe's Three Principles for Education for Democratic Citizenship are: rights and responsibilities, active participation and valuing diversity.

Bondarenko and Kozulin's (2006) concept of democratization of education is far broader and more complex ; it presupposes a free choice of educational options, the relatively easy access to any level of education, a smooth transition from one level of education to another, freedom with regard to creative endeavors for the teacher and the student, social guarantees, and much more in the way of measures that remove the shackles from education and liberate the individual potentials of all those involved in education. According to them, the democratization of education includes four fundamentally interconnected components:

1) THE FORM OF EDUCATION

The democratization of the forms of educational activity including the principles and the structures of education management, the forms and the methods of teaching as well as the pro-motion of their diversity, and the emphasis on individuality with regard to the educational activities of both the teacher and the student;

2) THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION

The democratization of the content of education, including democratic (objective, free, complete, and multi-faceted) reflection on the content of education in all subjects with due attention being paid to world experience and individual peculiarities and needs, the provision of fundamental education, the integration and interlinking of all subjects taught so as to constitute a solid dialectical outlook, and the humanization of the entire content and essence of education;

3) THE FUNCTIONING OF EDUCATION

The humanization of the functioning of educational establishments and the extracurricular activities of students, including the promotion of public forms of education;

4) INTERCONNECTIONS WITH EDUCATION

The democratization of the interactions of education with other spheres of social life (economy, science, culture, the public, mass media, state bodies, etc.), basing these interactions on mutual interests.

Over the last decade a majority of the leading international organizations which operate in the field of external evaluation and development of education have emphasized that school management must become participative and inclusive to meet the changing needs of diverse communities. The PISA survey (OECD, 2013) emphasized distributed leadership as one of the key factors of successful schools, in which teachers and other stakeholders are given opportunities shaping and discussing school goals and the development of the school curriculum (OECD, 2013).

Key steps for school heads in the area of democratic school governance

The role of the school heads in empowering democratic school governance with key steps and examples of how to be impmeneted on the school level are showed in the table below (adapted from the Bajkuša, Baketa, Pažur, Šalaj, 2017).

STEPS	HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT (GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES)
Determine basic democratic values at your school	✓ development of the school vision and mission that will support democratic values ✓ make fundamental school values visible in the school and to the wider community
Promote freedom of expression and the development of critical reflection on all levels	✓ organize an "open forum" once per month where different topics will be discussed in smaller groups (learners, staff and other stakeholders) on current topics/issues in the field of school management
Promote suppression of all forms of violence in school	✓ form a team to combat school violence ✓ provide a secure space and support for responding to any type of school violence
Encourage distributive school leadership	✓ form school teams who will deal with certain aspects of leadership (e.g. the team for the promotion of the culture of non-violence, the team for the improvement of teaching methods, team for cooperation with the local community, team for development of the innovations in schools...) ✓ involve the school board in managing certain processes in the school (e.g. evaluation of school curriculum implementation) ✓ involve the Parents' Council in the guidance related to the parents'- school relationship (e.g. parents' representatives in the Council organize education for other parents, representatives of parents in the

	council participate in solving issues that occur in school…) ✓ involve the Student Council in the decision-making consultation processes that concern them (e.g. student council representatives have the right attend and participate in the Teacher Council meetings…)
Monitor patterns of achievement for learners and ask groups of learners to discuss the possible solutions that will improve results and achievements	✓ if some groups or individual students continuously achieve lower assessment results, form a team to review barriers to progress and to improvement of individual student's success
Pay attention to balanced socio-emotional development of students and their mental health	✓ work on strengthening students' competences for cooperation and acceptance of diversity, ✓ include activities and support that will continuously work on students mental health and wellbeing ✓ work on students' self-confidence competences
Include local community actors in everyday school activities	✓ develop a strategy on how to include different stakeholders (local and regional authorities, associations, NGOs, trade unions, companies) in the everyday work of the school and implementation of the school projects
Include students in decision making process on the school level and make sure that their voice has an impact on outcomes	✓ include a student representative in decision-making process and in all school's bodies as equal representatives ✓ enable students to directly decide on different school issues and rules (e.g. organizing a student referendum on the issue)

Establish a student council that has a real power and autonomy	✓ To develop edit the procedures that regulate the method of election and scope of work of the Student Council ✓ discuss the criteria for selecting representatives in the student body council and implementation of democratic elections in all classes in school ✓ help students to create a work plan for the student council and a plan for the projects they will work on ✓ maintain the communication of representatives of the student council with Parents Council
Encourage establishment of the formal system of assessment of teachers' work made by the students	✓ examine how satisfied the students are with the work of their teachers through evaluation (e.g. weekly, monthly and half-yearly evaluations through different methods) ✓ discuss with the students their assessment of teachers work in order to point out the importance of evaluation and their future work
Actively inform parents on their participation in the work of school	✓ encourage parents' representatives in the parents' council and in the school council to consult with other parents (e.g. to provide a platform for the exchange of information between parents...)

Good practice example in defining school values and educational principles: North Harringay Primary School, London, UK

Upon entering the school, the school's values, mission and vision are the first thing anyone who is entering the school can see

North Harringay Primary School Values: **To develop curious, creative, committed, co-operative and critical children who are happy, healthy, confident, safe and respectful of others.**

At school, we respect each other's age, disabilities, gender, race, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation.
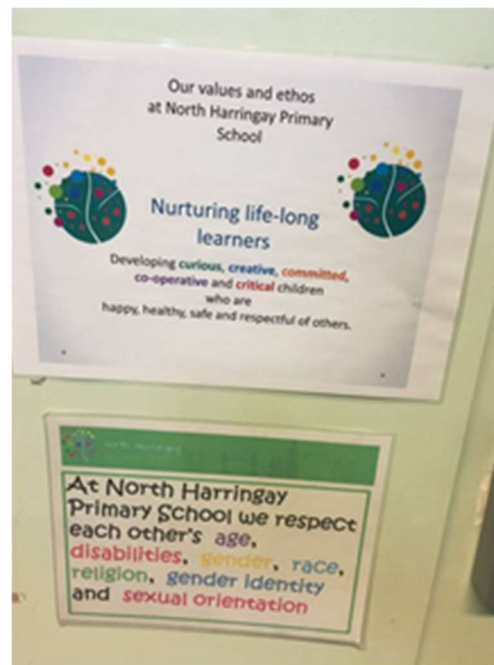
At the very entrance to the school it was pointed out that it is a multi-ethnic school where there is a great emphasis on interculturalism and respect for diversity.

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STUDENT VOICE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOL LEADERS

Sometimes I feel like teachers are overburdened and they do not see us as potential helpers. We are an unused resource in the school.

(Ema, student of the Croatian primary school involved in the Start the Change project)

A successful school leadership openly promotes a systemic, collaborative culture where all stakeholders, including students, can exercise influence in improving the school and solving complex problems. In his book dedicated to the student voice and professional development for staff, Morris (2019) points out that at the heart of effective school leadership is the ability to influence others rather than getting results by conducting managerial power. He argues that a rigid 'top-down' business model of leadership is not suited to education. Involving all a schools' human resources - including students - in the decision-making processes can be a major factor in determining a school's success. A culture grounded on trust, participation, reflective practice and transparency can redefine the understanding of leadership, making it more of a shared responsibility.

Fielding (2001) defines the term 'student voice' as students' ability to influence decisions that affect their lives. The UNCRC (1989) states that all children have the 'right to express their views freely in all matters affecting the child (Article 12), and to free expression; 'to seek, receive and impart information of all kinds, regardless of frontiers' (Article 13), freedom of expression in all matters affecting young people [or 'children'] (Article 12), and 'to seek, receive and impart information of all kinds, regardless of frontiers' (Article 13).Recognition of these rights placed a greater emphasis on student voice and participation in individual and collective decision making in schools. Another important aspect of the student voice is that schools play a vital part in preparing them for their future roles as 'active and informed citizens' who understand the importance of democracy at a national level; children and young people will be better equipped for this if they experience a democratic environment throughout their schooling (Queen and Owen, 2016).

Many young people, given the opportunity, argue that they should have greater opportunity to discuss current affairs. Ross (2019) cites several examples from small-group discussions he conducted in Europe: Oldrich, a 12 year old Czech student: 'if we don't know the relations of countries in the world, then we will be lost – I think we should not learn about these issues, rather we should discuss them'; and a group in Berlin where 15 year olds wanted to discuss allegations of migrant assaults in 2015 – 'we really had to push the teacher … they have their school curriculum which they stick to, they don't

like going off track". In Cordoba, 18 year old Nieves argued "the government says 'study maths, languages' – but for life? For values? 'Don't study these!'".

Research has identified a number of benefits of student voice (e.g. Deci and Ryan, 2008; Mitra, 2018), but it also suggests that the full potential of student voice is not being realized in many schools. In practice, student voice initiatives are only available for children who can participate in after-school activities and who fit into traditional adult views of well-spoken student leaders (Holdsworth, 2000). The phrase "student voice" itself perpetuates the illusion students are a homogeneous unit, and thus marginalizes and disenfranchised many students (Lyions & Brasof, 2020). Formal programs, such as student councils, are often associated with tokenistic student participation, or are elitist: this can lead to further alienation of the wider student body from school. A system in which well-behaved, articulate, academically successful students tend to be the only ones selected as representatives does not represent disengaged or disadvantaged students and it is these students who most need to be heard if teachers are to better understand their views and how to re-engage them in positive learning experiences (Fielding, 2004a).

Other research has followed school communities that transform pathways for student voice and move away from traditional teacher-lead student councils to student-run initiatives. Through innovative approaches, it has been found that student leadership in school decision-making processes can generate exciting opportunities. These innovations can offer a range of benefits for educators and the school community, as student voice is personally and socially beneficial for students, increasing self-esteem, self-efficacy and school connectedness for those involved (Beaudoin, 2005) and benefits have also been shown to students' conceptions of citizenship, civic efficacy and sense of social justice (Mitra & Serriere, 2012).

CLUES TO INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN STRENGTHENING STUDENT VOICE

✓ **Publicly demonstrating commitment to the student voice**

School leaders who genuinely support mainstreaming the voice of students demonstrate this commitment as a natural part of school culture. The good practices in the schools that nourish student voice as a part of their school culture show that educators and students need to engage in open dialogue, particularly in the spaces usually reserved only for teachers (school policy documents, curriculum planning, teaching methodologies, etc.). However, the prerequisite for this to happen is the decision of the school leadership to build the whole-school approach to student voice, and making this decision widely understood. Central to this is the recognition that students are a resource for the improvement of the school and that they are source of knowledge with growing competence to

participate in solving schools' problems and thus actively contribute to theirs and school's improvement.

✓ **Building a reflective school community**

Consultation with students can bring tensions between teachers, and between students and teachers, with both feeling uncomfortable about a disruption of traditional power structures. One of the biggest challenges is that providing students with a voice in decision-making processes represents some form of contradiction that needs to be acknowledged. Making student voice meaningful transforms a system that is externally prescribed in advance for all, children, teachers and school leadership. This means that when teachers and principals decide to empower students, they often have to battle the prescriptive nature of the system. In acknowledging this, school leaders and teachers can become more reflective in their practice and more creative looking for potential spaces for innovation, change and improvement.

✓ **Importance of seeking and engaging diverse voices**

Instead of "speaking about" children and "speaking for" marginalised and disengaged students, an effective and inclusive participatory system develops the dialogue directly with the students who are disengaged from school life. A variety of creative strategies are needed to hear the perspective of students who are quiet or passive or have a minority or disadvantaged background. Their voices are usually not seen as constructive, but their contributions are of particular value in showing where provision is failing to meet needs, either within or outside of school. In this way, the school invests effort in re-engaging students and increasing their sense of belonging to the school community and consequently their academic success.

✓ **Exploring innovative ideas for promoting student voice**

Innovative ideas can often come from children, as their perspective is unique, and they possess the situational knowledge simply by being "users" of the education system. Creative schools seek to build the culture of dialogue with students (and among students) by providing safe space for deliberative conversations in various settings: the classrooms, teacher room, principals' offices and other school spaces. The work can develop through informal conversations with students and also through planned research (organised by students) investigating their perspectives. Opening the investigation process can stimulate greater chances to generate ideas, new perspectives, as well as creating a sense of ownership, connection and relation to solving school problems. Sometimes, the process of seeking solutions through wide participation can become a solution in itself, strengthening student participation and reducing student disengagement from the school.

✓ **Improving quality of existing student voice programs**

Everything that school teaches about democracy and democratic processes could be undermined if it is not experienced and seen to work in the school through existing representative bodies. Such bodies and programs, where a group of student represent other students, need to demonstrate transparent and reflective practice. Various researchers (Mayes et al, 2019) recommend that student representatives might collectively deliberate on the following questions (school leaders and staff should also support this reflective process and learn from it):

- Whose voices are listened to in the 'acoustics' of our school? Whose voices are dismissed as immature, rude and/or uninformed?

- Who is expected to speak, listen, and change in my classroom and school?

- Who takes part in our 'student voice' practices and initiatives? Who misses out?

- As student 'representatives', how are we comparatively privileged in relation to other students? Are our positions of privilege and relative power blurring our judgement? Is the privilege motivating us more than the idea of school improvement?

- Can students (e.g. student representatives) really be experts about the lives of all other students? Is it possible that we could be, without realising, ignoring or disempowering others?

- When student representatives sort through and mediate other students' suggestions, is it possible that we can 'dilute' or selectively distort their voices?

- What might we have to learn from younger students, quiet students, and those who may not be recognised as "good" students?

Collectively asking these questions, students and teachers together, may support the building the culture of dialogue among peers and among students and teachers that leads to deepening of connections and mutual learning in an increasingly democratic school.

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Good practice example: Students' project "I wonder too - the voice of the student council in the time of COVID-19", Primary school Ivan Meštrović, Zagreb, Croatia

Issues identified by students:
- unacceptable verbal communication with some teachers
- insufficient flow of information in class-teacher relationships
- the organization of distance learning during the pandemic
- too little participate in the life of the school - their voice is not heard or considered sufficiently

Positive aspects identified by student
- satisfaction with the school and teachers
- newly enrolled students feel good and accepted.

This project arose when it was realised that while many people knew what the student council is, but they didn't know what it was for, what role it played. The student council plays a key role in the participation of students in the work of the school and influences the interaction between students and the school. The Croatian Act on education in primary and secondary schools stipulates that the student council consists of representatives of all classes and that the representative of the student council participates in the work of the school body when deciding on the rights and obligations of students without the right to decide. This means that the representative of the Student Council should be involved in making decisions related to students, for example, he/she should express his/her opinion about distance learning, but he/she has no right to decide what will happen. The school's Statute determines the way of working and the scope of activities of the student council. But does the student council always fulfil its tasks and is it even involved in the work of the school in such a way? These are very common questions that are sometimes not easy to answer. It was precisely because of these questions that the project "I wonder - the voice of the student council in the time of COVID-19" was launched in the school in the school year 2020/2021.

Goal: to investigate the position of the student council during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: online surveys and focus groups, meetings

Duration: one school year

Additional materials: computers for conducting online research and - if necessary - online meetings

Key activities:

1. Conducting focus groups and interviews

The results of the focus groups revealed rare but existing cases of unacceptable verbal communication, an insufficiently successful flow of information between the class-teacher/classroom-professional service, gender inequality, failure to fulfil the role of the Student Council and extremely poor organization of distance learning (which has been repaired, but could can be prevented by holding student council meetings). All these problems could have been solved much earlier, but they were not.

2. Changes in the leadership and organization of the Student Council

The coordination and leadership of the Student Council has been taken over by a new teacher. So far, a total of 9 meetings of the Student Council have been held, 3 meetings with students of lower classes (7-11 years old) and 6 meetings with students of upper classes (11-15 years old). At every meeting, the students question everything they are interested in without hesitation and get an answer in the shortest possible time.

3. Regular holding of meetings and work on identified problems

The topics that are often repeated at the meetings are: traffic in front of the school, inappropriate behaviour of students, technical problems with smart boards, tablets and computers, destruction of school property, problems with school toilets, questions about the repair of windows and the roof (renovation of the school in its entirety), general pollution of the school environment etc. Part of the problem is in the process of being solved, while part is waiting for the principal's answers, which the students will receive soon.

Prepared by Ema Kovačević, student of the 8th grade

Meeting of the Student Council in the school yard

Also the schools established a new group of students called the **Reformators**, which consists 5th to 8th graders that meets every Thursday evening via Zoom, where everyone then expresses their opinion and proposals that are further considered with the other group members.

What students stated it was most valuable experience while participating in the project...

- express our opinion publicly without shame (even though there are older students with us)

- communicate and agree with older and younger students

- respect other people's opinions (even when we don't agree with them)

- understand that one's opinion can change when someone explains their idea to you well

- see how problems can be solved creatively

- see how to fight for your voice

  recognize prejudices and many injustices (which some students of our school encountered)

- how to become more open and ready to learn about some new things that we didn't know before

The students were most proud of...

- participating and creating a code of ethics between students and teachers that will improve their relationships

- the will and effort of every student who participated in this project

- the criteria used for the selection of students of the generation

- how we designed the Open Day organized by students

- that we got the opportunity to change something in the school and we helped other generations.

The students' message to other schools and students who may be inspired by our project:

- *be persistent in everything you do*

- *always express your opinion and do so without fear*

- *always present as many ideas as possible - you will come to a solution faster and complete the task successfully*

- *don't just sit on the bench, but do something about the problem if we make an effort and work together, we can make a change*

- *it is better to try and fail than not to try*

A CHECKLIST FOR MORE EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION AND DECISION-MAKING INVOLVING LEARNERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Building a democratic culture in a learning institution can start with well-managed and carefully targeted consultations about issues – ensuring that participants understand the issues and are confident that the outcomes of the consultation will influence changes in actions and policies. Starting a consultation on poorly defined issues – or worst, where a decision has already been made by managers - will damage trust and relationships and undermine any pre-existing democratic culture.

The following checklist may help education leaders to plan how they consult with all members of their working community.

WHAT TO START WITH?	In the early stages of building a democratic culture it is useful to focus on issues that are widely known about, and where there are real alternatives to be considered.
	Examples might include
	• the use of elective periods in the learning programme
	• improving the variety of learning methods
	• the usefulness of homework tasks
	• home-school communications
	• partnerships and links with other institutions,
	• catering and social provision
	• stress reduction and promoting well-being and safety in all areas
WHO TO INCLUDE?	A democratic culture is defined by the trust that all members and stakeholders will be able to contribute to all decisions that affect them. This should guide the setting up of consultation exercises. Mass consultations are not always

	appropriate so selection of the right people to be involved is important. Defining a 'representative group' should not result in the same enthusiastic and committed learners and staff becoming involved repeatedly as this rapidly becomes a predictable elite and excludes a wider breadth of experience and opinion.
	Diversity and inclusion need to be carefully managed, and if a consultation process is offered on a volunteer basis, the balance and representation of the selected group need to be assessed and, if necessary, altered by further recruitment. Whilst this clearly applies to the well-understood equalities characteristics, other factors may need to be considered such as learners who may have poor attendance or negative behavioural reputations.
	Another aspect of 'who to involve?' is to approach people from the local community. A valuable perspective can be gained by working with people who can bring a fresh external viewpoint. Support from a local community group or business may be a good way to mentor the learners in the consultation process and initiate fruitful relationships for the future (work experience placements etc.).
WHEN?	As a general rule, it's best explain the need for a decision as early as possible and start engaging and briefing participants from the start.
	Sometimes a decision is forced by a deadline and wider participation is impractical. Effective communication is essential in these circumstances to explain the considerations, the outcomes and the reasons why wider participation was not possible.

	The annual patterns of the education year may dictate the options for consultation – but good management requires forward thinking and planning.
LIMITS ON PARTICIPATION	Some decisions are not open to wider participation or consultation for reasons of security, protection of vulnerable learners or staff, confidentiality, welfare or safeguarding. Leadership teams need to be clear amongst themselves about the justification for avoiding wider involvement. They should check that excluding others from participation is for legitimate reasons and not simply to bolster their own power through the rationing of information. Leaders need to remain aware at all times that the resources that they are allocating are not their own personal funds but are public budgets designated for education benefits and that their decisions should ultimately be open to public scrutiny.
DESIGNATING RESPONSIBILITY	consultation processES require efficient and orderly coordination. Usually a staff member is required to carry the process through – according to a timescale that should be widely understood. Senior staff may need to do this in the early stages of developing a democratic culture, but, with some mentoring and support, staff at any level or job role can gain valuable experience, confidence and credibility by taking on the responsibility for coordination – which will inevitably involve managing clear communications with learners and other staff. With the right support, groups of learners can also assume these roles.
THE INVESTMENT OF TIME	The sharing of information required for widening participation clearly takes time that would not be needed if decisions were taken by one person. Leaders may need to consider the costs and benefits of altering the processes of communication, planning and management to bring about this culture change. Central to this consideration is the

	evidence from many studies that creating a democratic culture leads to academic, social and emotional improvements for the whole institution
COMMUNICATIONS	A whole-institution move towards democratic principles cannot be effective unless communications reach all members throughout the process. The sense of inclusion rests on this.
BRIEFING, TRAINING AND BUILDING ON LEARNING	Asking learners to take on responsibilities and participate (possibly alongside adults) in 'real world' decisions places new learning challenges on them. Training, support and mentoring will be required. Clear positive briefing is needed from the outset, with special support for learners who may have additional needs. The skills and confidence that can be gained by learners (and staff) from this process can be immense (it has been described by some as 'life changing'), but as with other learning, mediation and facilitation will usually be needed to help learners to recognise and acknowledge what they have achieved.
USING A VARIETY OF METHODS INCREASES MOTIVATION AND LEARNING	The time spent on consultation, research, reporting and decision-making can be turned into an enjoyable and motivating experience. Using a variety of research methods, involving adults from outside, changing the way that meetings are held - and increasingly asking learners to take the lead - can all increase motivation and learning.
RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT	It's possible that external bodies may be keen to support a process that clearly generates new learning for participants. Local industry or businesses may be keen to offer some support in the form of specialist expertise (research, IT, design, data crunching, interview techniques... etc.) and under the correct conditions, working as a mentor with

	learners can add to a junior manager's human management skills and community experience
SPREADING THE WORD AND DEMONSTRATING THE VALIDITY OF THE PARTICIPATION	Sometimes the main work of a consultation exercise only involves a selected group of learners. In such cases, a strategy is needed to keep other stakeholders fully briefed. This could be through flyers, displays, occasional newsletters, website pages, blogs, video reports, tik tok updates, presentations or assemblies.
	Local media may be interested to hear of outcomes from the learners involved. If they can articulate the learning they have achieved and it is reported locally, the institution will gain useful publicity.
	Maintaining high levels of awareness in all stakeholders is one of the keys to gaining maximum cultural benefit… BUT, to repeat a point made earlier, consultation, decision-making and the formulation of recommendations and reports will be counter-productive if it transpires that no notice was taken of the results by the education leaders. Thorough public acknowledgement, reward and genuinely expressed gratitude for the efforts invested need to be accompanied by very clear statements such as "you said…what we are now going to do is…".

A CHECKLIST FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: DO WE EMPOWER STUDENTS VOICE ON THE SCHOOL LEVEL?

In my school…	Starting out	Good progress	Well established
Students are listened to			
Students are supported in expressing their views			
Student's views are taken into account when making decisions that affect them			
Students participate in decision-making meetings and events, and are often included in detecting problems and planning interventions			
Students share power and responsibility for decision-making with adults			
Students identify problems, create solutions, organise actions, advocate or educate on changes inside and outside of the school context			
Students discuss, monitor, decide on and consult others about changes inschool rules and policies (-such as discipline, behaviour, and student well-being)			
Students also do this about matters related to learning and teaching (such as the school curriculum, school subjects, activities, teaching approaches)			
Students discuss the uses and potentials of existing and possible alternative spaces (cafeteria, library, hallways, classrooms, equipment…), suggesting improvements and enhancements			

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY NEEDS A CREATIVE DIMENSION

"There is no doubt that creativity is the most important human resource of all. Without creativity, there would be no progress, and we would be forever repeating the same patterns."
Edward De Bono

"'Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world'"
Albert Einstein

With the confidence to be creative, learners are more likely to make full use of the information and experiences available to them and extend themselves beyond their habitual or expected responses. When learners are encouraged to think independently and creatively, they become more interested in discovering things for themselves, more open to new ideas, and keen to work with others to explore ideas. As a result, their motivation, pace of learning, levels of achievement and self-esteem all increase.

In order for young people to be creative, to express themselves creatively and use their full potential, one must ensure the conditions and the environment that support that creativity are in place. This environment should give opportunities and regular encouragement to:

- explore,

- participate actively,

- collaborate with others,

- go 'off piste' and follow a passion or interest (not planned by the teacher) that emerges

- ask questions,

- take risks and make mistakes,

- express themselves freely.

Most educators understand the central importance of nurturing creativity in all of their learners. It can be difficult to fit additional activities to achieve this into an overcrowded and content-heavy curriculum, but the benefits to motivation, inclusion and learning outcomes of a strong creative dimension are clear.

Education leaders will often be reminded of the importance of creativity – in an official report, a new piece of research or another policy directive. These often justify creativity as an increasingly valuable characteristic, sought after by employers and essential for the national economy. We are arguing here that promoting creative thinking and facilitating collaborative creative acts also have an essential role in the education of democratic citizens. We also offer suggestions about re-thinking the role of creativity in education and suggest ideas for evaluating and strengthening creativity as part of every learner's educational entitlement.

Defining Creativity

"Creativity is an ability that helps us process the wealth of information that our minds collect and forge connections between different pieces of information in order to find a solution to a problem in a new way, or to come to a new understanding of the problem itself."

Zimmermann, N-E. and E. Leondieva

This definition comes from the **Competendo Facilitator Handbook #4: Creativity**

The COMPETENDO website is a rich and valuable source of high-quality guidance and resources which we strongly recommend to all educators.
https://competendo.net/en/Handbooks_for_Facilitators

The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education (2019, 2021) in their two reports set out well-researched recommendations for stimulating creativity across the national education system. They suggest the following helpful definitions.

"Creativity is: *The capacity to express, imagine, conceive or make something that wasn't there before.*

Creative thinking is: *A process through which knowledge and intuition are applied to make, express or imagine something novel or individual in its context…. [it] often requires perseverance, discipline, playing with possibilities and collaboration.*

Teaching for creativity is: *Explicitly using pedagogies and practices that cultivate creativity in young people."*

These definitions clearly dispel the simplistic error of assuming that creativity is a concept that is only relevant in discussion of 'arts' subjects; they also clarify the need to provide a learning environment in which creativity is a consciously identified, planned and well-implemented dimension that permeates all areas of learning.

Creativity and Education for Democracy

It is fundamental to education for democracy that all learners gain a sense that it is every citizen's right and responsibility to engage in various aspects of the democratic processes – in having their say, individually or collectively, in decisions that affect them and finding ways to participate, understand and evaluate sources of information, support politically active organisations, lobby and campaign - rather than simply voting in national elections. These behaviours will be made more likely and facilitated by certain values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and habits of mind which should develop during their educational journey. The connection to creativity is made clear in the following two extracts from *Creativity* (Zimmermann and Leondieva 2017):

"The participatory revolution of democracy sought to change power systems based on the idea of a self-conscious citizen. As such, it is precisely democracy's self-conscious citizens and their ability to initiate change by envisioning, connecting, discussing, deciding, and working on common issues that should be strengthened and supported by schools, civil society organizations, and governments in order to contribute to and foster democratic ideals."

"If everybody should be a co-creator, then the goal of education is to empower individuals to be involved and ideally to innovate, which in turn means having a bigger impact, one which may even affect the creativity of the social system. Creativity should be perceived as an instrument for the self-empowerment of self-responsible, socially minded, and individual citizens. It starts with the attitude of seeing oneself as capable, powerful, and with the legitimacy to create."

Creativity and Inclusion

As educators, we seek successful and satisfying engagement in learning for all our learners. All learning groups are diverse and should be described as mixed ability; all humans possess different aptitudes and cognitive habits and preferences. The greater diversity of learning modes activated in any group, the greater will be the chances of discovering and developing untapped learning potential. This applies at all (traditionally labelled) 'levels of ability'. The use of a wide range of creative modes of learning, offering experiential discovery, collaborative explorations and many different avenues for the expression and sharing of meaning, may provide ways for the marginal, less academic or vulnerable learners to operate as fully engaged members of the group.

Pedagogy and Creative Thinking

Context

The learning environment and educational ethos can do much to instil learners with self-confidence through the encouragement, celebration and displaying of their creative acts: classroom performances, exhibitions, concerts, poetry readings, booklet publications, displays, video presentations, broadcasts and podcasts… promoted to small or large internal or external audiences, published on websites, exchanged with partner schools (internationally) and offered to local mass media.

Learning Activity

Pedagogy can be analysed in a number of ways: the tasks set before learners, the groupings of learners for each task, the selection of resources used as stimuli, the interactions encouraged between learners, the nature of ongoing and summative feedback received by learners, the proportion of talking time used by the teacher, the nature of questioning etc. Optimising pedagogy for creativity also provides a beneficial learning environment for many other educational objectives: increasing motivation, inclusion, executive functioning, and metacognitive skills and (in the context of CANDIICE) education of democratic citizens.

Creativity can be characterised as requiring the interaction of two types of thinking (for example, as shown by Penaluna, Coates and Penaluna, 2010):

- **Additive, Associative or Divergent Thinking**

Seeking and gathering information and concepts, seeking to relate previously unrelated elements, accumulating diverse angles and perspectives, crossing traditional delineations, welcoming inconsistency, complexity, contradictions and illogicality.

- **Analytical, Filtering or Convergent Thinking**

Classifying, comparing, ranking, filtering, discarding, evaluating, applying codes and rules.

'Yin and Yang' Thinking

The creative thinking process can operate as a repeated sequence alternating between an additive, associative, expansive phase when the mind collects and discovers cognitive elements and a focussing, filtering, evaluating, connecting and synthesising phase when structure and direction may be assembled towards the creative product. As creativity is frequently an iterative process, this sequence may be repeated many times before the thinker(s) arrive(s) at an end point. In Eastern phenomenology, this would be instinctively understood as the complementary harmony between 'yin' and 'yang' movement – opening and closing. In more familiar terminology this might be described as alternating between looser and tighter mental frameworks

Educators who use this simple model of cognitive processes (and have active encouragement from their peers and managers) will be able to find and share numerous ways to encourage, teach and nurture these habits of mind in their learners and optimise their learning environments to grow and celebrate the creative outcomes.

Everyday examples include:

- Open-ended, collaborative small group projects
- Challenges to generate questions rather than answers (from a given stimulus)
- Requiring multiple varying responses – both probable and improbable (rather than a single definitive answer)
- Asking learners to create half an image, poem or other product and then mixing up and randomly asking them to complete the incomplete work from another (anonymous) learner
- Providing learners with a range of artworks, short texts (poems or haikus), musical excerpts etc. and challenging learners to find metaphorical connections between some of the artworks and some contemporary social, environmental, ethical or political issues. They can work in small groups to select an issue from a list suggested by the facilitator (or they may choose their own) and then find the metaphorical connections with one or more artworks
- Starting with a short narrative (a short story, poem, parable or folk tale) and challenging groups of learners to recreate the story in another medium – abstract image, music, video, dance, drama, mime, rap etc.

The Challenge for Education Leaders and Innovators

The following points may be useful for you and colleagues to creatively reflect-on your education setting and take a fresh perspective on the place of creativity in your work. We hope that these starters stimulate more questions, relevant to your setting, and start an exploration with all your co-educators into the possibilities of enriching your learners' creative journeys, so moving the culture of your work in a creative direction. This list is not intended to suggest an order or priority.

- Is the word 'creativity' seen by some in the establishment as being relevant mainly to the arts and recreational areas of learning?

- How prominently are creative products showcased, highlighted, displayed and brought to the attention of visitors and parents as well as to all learners? Do those on display represent the creative work of a wide range of learners of all abilities and ages?

- What opportunities are arranged for staff to share innovative learning ideas regularly with each other, and to work together to research, devise and adapt new, motivating activities?

- By what mechanism do members of staff know which types of learning are most enjoyed by the learners?

- How does the concept of creativity feature in your learning and teaching policies and the shared 'theory of learning'. All educational setting operate with a theory of learning – whether explicitly evolved based on research, consultation and consolidation, or implicitly, based on accepted assumptions about the organisation of learning and pedagogy

- If you asked 10 randomly selected learners how strongly they thought the establishment valued creative activities and creative learning, what do you think they would say? Would they consider acts and outputs of creativity which are not part of an examination syllabus to be valued by the staff?

- In the careers advice and employment information given to learners, are the growing numbers of creative industries given equal status with other sectors of the economy?

- Are all staff encouraged and supported to keep up to date with the constantly changing opportunities for digital creativity? Are they given time, resources and space to incorporate digital creativity, expression and presentation into their work with learners?

- How are the cultural and artistic resources beyond the establishment (either local or further afield nationally and internationally) brought into contact with learners for inspirational exposure (e.g. attendance at events) and for extended partnership work engaging learners with practising artists and other creative professionals?

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WHOLE-SCHOOL CONFERENCE EVENTS TO ENERGISE PARTICIPATION AND BUILD A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Introduction

Preparing future generations for their roles as democratic citizens requires more than theoretical lessons in which they are told about the workings of electoral democracy and the roles of various elected parts of government. All educators understand the power of learning by doing, and there are many ways that learning democratic citizenship can be energised through democratic participation projects that are experiential and active. Such projects offer numerous opportunities to develop leadership and collaboration skills, encourage learners to be engaged in improving their own learning experiences and learning environment, and strengthen the sense of community and active membership of a 'listening and learning' institution.

A good way to launch this kind of work is to propose a 'learning improvement' or 'whole-school' consultation in which the institution, as a whole, reflects on itself. Guidance that can assist education leaders in strategic planning can result from involving learners in researching, debating and analysing their knowledge of day-to-day 'consumer' experiences; this can bring fresh ideas to current practices and suggest practical ideas for improvement. This can be a very powerful learning and bonding experience for both staff and learners if it is launched and promoted as 'pause for research, thought and self-reflection' – a genuinely collective effort to improve things - rather than a marginal additional task to be absorbed into the normal routine lesson timetable. To do this well requires commitment, trust and bravery from leaders and the recognition that a worthwhile process will need reasonable time and will interrupt the regular timetables. The educational benefit of such 'stop the clock' or suspended-timetable events is well recognised by many schools who use them regularly to offer an injection of different learning modes and re-grouping for special themed days.

Different kinds of events

Participation events can be organised on large or small scales, designed as 'one-off' opportunities for whole-school review or built into an annual cycle. Whichever way they are organised, they are best if they offer:

- Wide inclusive learner involvement, engaging learners who are not the usual participants in student councils and other roles of responsibility
- Preparatory work to help identify relevant issues and build confidence of learners in the process
- Varied events and activities that are significantly different from routine lessons
- Careful preparation and support for any young people who take on roles of responsibility (e.g. advance promotion and communication, recording/video reporting, making presentations, mini drama stimuli or workshop facilitation)
- Evidence of serious commitment from the Principal/Director and senior leadership to participate, listen, take learners' views and perceptions seriously and adopt a facilitative role which may differ from their customary position of authority

The range and scale of events can include:

- Class meetings and research projects
- Year group forums
- Whole-school review and reflection conferences

- Neighbourhood or city area learners' conventions with different schools coming together

Each smaller event above could act as a preparation for the next in the list, perhaps forming a year-long sequence (a 'rolling conference') in collaboration with other local schools or colleges.

The role of a school or college student council

For all of these events, an important factor is the way in which the learners take on central organising and leading roles, but this does not happen without well-planned support and preparation. Class-level events can be supported quite easily within lessons with appropriate work leading up to a class review or decision/recommendation-making session. Larger year-group or whole school conferences obviously need more preparation.

If there is an existing representative group such as a student council, they may naturally assume organisational and facilitation roles in the preparation and leadership of the event(s) but there is also educational value in involving a much wider group of learners to spread the benefits of experiential learning.

Preparation, expectations and community involvement

Significant lead time is needed to develop ideas, get learners to do preliminary research on key issues and recruit and prepare young leaders for their central roles. This also requires enthusiasm and time from a number of staff to assist in the coordination and training of the young people.

Briefings and consultations with all staff members, at all levels of the organisation, are essential from the earliest stage. It will be necessary to recruit a small group of adults to support and lead the process to success. All staff will have some involvement and will also contend with some interruptions to their regular timetables. Clear and positive communications and a long period of notice will go some way to minimising any reluctance amongst them. There may be appropriate community members, local agencies, school governors or parents and carers who would be keen to support the process of whole-school improvement and would enjoy learning from the views of young people. These could be very useful additional adult support throughout the whole process. The additional management time spent with local stakeholders who show such commitment to education, is a very worthwhile investment in networking the institution with its local community.

Preparing learner-led workshops and creative inputs

It's important that the activities planned for these events are not exactly the same as regular timetabled lessons or simply meetings, talking and writing. The pattern of activities relevant to each institution will be different and depend upon the creative imagination of the learners and the supporting adults. The list below suggests activities that have proved successful.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

- Small groups of learners decide on research questions and conduct surveys and interviews with other learners. This may include surveys with parents, in the local community or with businesses or employers to explore the image of the institution and the reputation of its members in the area. Reports of the findings from these surveys could be presented in the form of video journalism and edited to inform sessions during the conference day. Alternatively live presentations can be prepared by the researchers with attractive visual aids. Creative presentations might also be appropriate – drama or role plays scripted to

voice opinions collected to serve as a summary the findings of the surveys.

- Small team of learners could plan surveys of the learning environment. A planning workshop of volunteers could design a survey schedule and then split into groups who take responsibility for different areas and aspects of the buildings and grounds. Learners could decide to focus on specific aspects, for example:

  - Visual appearance, lighting and decoration
  - Maintenance and safety
  - Wall displays, artwork, colour
  - Evidence of cultural diversity, language representation
  - Sense of welcome for visitors, signposting, language, what is on show for first impressions?
  - Graffiti and litter
  - Access and safety for people with disabilities
  - Recycling facilities and encouragement to use them
  - Energy usage, wasted lighting or power
  - Inclusive toilet facilities, cleanliness, state of repair, equipment, gender specific and gender-neutral needs
  - Safety of spaces in and around the building for different ages, hidden areas, smoking, risk of bullying
  - Uses of territory by different age groups, social mixing in social spaces
  - Space for different kinds of play

- If there is any possibility of renewing or redesigning any part of the site, a team of learners could be asked to research ideas for building designs and improvements, finding designs and pictures online and compiling a presentation with some imaginative ideas. This group would need support in recognising financial constraints.

Organising roles

Young people can be encouraged to play a number of organisational and administrative roles such as:

- designing posters and social media campaigns to launch and promote the project;

- creating a blog seeking and reporting on suggestions and posting regular updates about the approaching conference;

- making short, animated videos explaining and promoting the conference for posting on school website and any screens available around the school;

- the attendance of a local politician, councillor or education department official may be appropriate to open the event and congratulate the young people on taking on a responsible task, or to attend and the end and hear the summing up and recommendations. Parents and other community members could also be invited to a closing presentation. Invitations need to be sent out early to gain a chance of a slot in politician's diary. A group of learners could take on the hosting arrangements for communications;

- an overall coordination group might encourage young people to choose topics, recruit people to run workshops and coordinate the design of a programme;

- setting up a presentation group to devise a drama to open and introduce the event. This could be a visionary fantasy about education in the future, a drama about a stranger entering the school and being greeted in different ways, or a series of drama sketches illustrating key issues to be explored during the day. These presentations could be in any creative form such as mime, rap, dance, video, still image presentation, posters displayed around the entrance area…etc;

- a group could organise a creative competition for other learners to create a piece of serious or imaginative work around the keys issues being discussed or the future of education. The results could be displayed as stimulus materials for discussion, read out or performed to open the event;

- a group could take responsibility for documenting and reporting on the event i.e. a 'Media Team'. They could use sound recording or video to interview selected people or collect 'vox pops'. A very smart team might present edited highlights at the end of the day, or, more realistically, in an assembly soon after;

- one school in UK was successful in getting a local newspaper to produce a special conference edition, with the help of students, with short articles, images, quizzes and pieces raising key questions. The newspaper provided a short print run to be given out on the day;

- a group could be responsible for hosting any visitors attending the event, providing refreshments etc;

- another media-related group could write press releases and try to get some local media to cover the event. If they were successful, they could organise certain people to be interviewed by visiting reporters;

- there are numerous administrative roles in designing, printing and collating any paperwork, programmes, worksheets, evaluation sheets, summary sheets to record discussions and suggestions;

- there may be a need to display some key messages or questions in a noticeable way in the working rooms – an environmental team may think of ways to make the normal working environment look a little different to help manage the 'ambience' and create a sense of a 'novelty' event;

- during a full day conference there is usually a need for site managers who take responsibility for finding out what each workshop or session needs and negotiating with staff what furniture is needed in each room this can lead into being 'front of house' helpers who know the programme very well and can direct people to the right rooms for each activity

Other schools

The impact of democratic learning from these events can be increased significantly if they can be arranged with one or more other schools. This could be done by inviting a delegation of participants from another school or inviting them to share the planning and leadership of the event from the earliest stage. The additional investment of time and communications needed are likely to be rewarded by the opening of new dimensions of learning, as long as the integration of the different groups is well-thought through and carefully managed. Comparing experiences across different schools can add greater insights into the learning process.

EXAMPLES OF RESOURCE MATERIALS

'Changes and Chances' a young persons' conference to help plan school reorganisation across Leicester City (UK Midlands)

IO 4 WHOLE
SCHOOL CONFERENC

- Promotion and publicity materials

- Invitations to local education leaders to hear recommendations

- Checklist for training session for learners planning to lead workshops

- Examples of learner-led workshops

- Conference Programme

- End of day conference evaluation sheet

- Start of day – activity worksheets for arrival and registration

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES – EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES TO PROMOTE LEARNING FOR DEMOCRACY

"We have different opinions than the teachers, so we don't talk about that - it's tabu."

Danijela, 15 years old, Rijeka, Croatia

"But if we are to learn here in school, then we should talk about this! I miss it, I miss the opportunity." Kamilia, 15 years old; Krakow, Poland

This section addresses two critical questions for educators who seek to develop democratic values. Democracy is a political system, and discussions with young people about the nature of democracy with young people necessarily touch on issues of political organisation and political issues. These will often be controversial.

- Should educators avoid raising controversial issues with young learners for fear of difficulty or outside criticism?

- Are controversial issues an essential part of education for democracy?

Education professionals may be concerned that raising critical issues about the working of democracy could leave them open to criticism for bringing political bias or indoctrination into their work. They may also fear that allowing a discussion of a current controversial topic may lead to a situation in which feelings are hurt, strongly conflicting attitudes are expressed, and they are uncertain how to respond or control the situation. We argue, however, that all branches of education carry responsibility to include learning about current issues and promote appropriate learning to develop learners' skills and competences in:

- managing disagreements;

- learning from viewpoints which differ from their own; and

- evaluating the unregulated information in the media that will demand their attention throughout their lives.

The Council of Europe's *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* (2010) states that

"An essential element of all education for democratic citizenship and human rights education is the promotion of social cohesion and intercultural dialogue and the valuing of diversity and equality, including gender equality; to this end, it is essential to develop knowledge, personal and social skills and understanding that reduce conflict, increase appreciation and understanding of the differences

between faith and ethnic groups, build mutual respect for human dignity and shared values, encourage dialogue and promote non-violence in the resolution of problems and disputes"

It follows that issues which may be seen as controversial need to be included, and they form an essential element in the effective education for sustaining the future of inclusive democracy

DEFINITION

Kerr and Huddleston (2020) provide a useful definition of 'controversial issues': "…issues which arouse strong feelings and divide opinion in communities and in society".

Kerr and Huddleston also reinforce the importance of including learning about controversial and topical issues for all learners, in order "to strengthen the role of education in promoting the core values of the Council of Europe – democracy, human rights and the rule of law – and the concept of education as a bulwark against social evils such as extremism and the radicalisation of youth, xenophobia and discrimination, violence and hate-speech, loss of faith in politics and politicians." (2020)

It is important to note that any controversial topic may trigger different reactions from country to country or even between regions within the same country.

THE BEUTELSBACH CONSESUS

In Germany education leaders have been guided by a simple set of principles called the Beutelsbach Consensus, which emerged from a conference held in 1976 to resolve conflicting arguments over perceived bias and indoctrination in education (translations into English, French, Spanish and Italian and the original German are at https://www.lpb-bw.de/beutelsbacher-konsens/).

The Beutelsbach Consensus defines two different categories of controversial issues:

- EMPIRICAL
  matters which are controversial in scholarship where academic or scientific opinions differ and further evidence or research may bring about a greater general agreement, and

- VALUES
  those issues which are moral, ethical or political – where different opinions may be based on different values.

The Consensus offers three central principles which should be taken together and should underpin all education relating to political or controversial issues:

1. WELCOME AND ENCOURAGE DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS
   Educators should not overrule, overpower, suppress or dominate an opinion expressed by

any learner. This emphasises the clear distinction between education and indoctrination. It follows that educators should not present only certain selected viewpoints for discussion and thereby omit other opinions.

2. ENSURE THAT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES ARE RAISED

"Matters which are controversial in scholarship and political affairs should also be presented as controversial in the classroom" Educators should encourage learners to explore current controversial issues as an essential part of education for democracy. Learners should be made aware of the range of differing opinions.

3. LEAD LEARNING TOWARDS ACTION AND POLITICAL COMPETENCE

Discussion of any controversial issue should not remain theoretical, but should explore the real-life impact on the learners, their communities, the public good and their present and future lives. This should lead to an understanding of ways to have an impact on political realities, based on deeper understanding of these personal and shared interests.

(The original principle referred only to: 'Giving weight to the interests of learners'. A more recent interpretation includes other people and the public good and is thus more consistent with contemporary European values.)

(See Anders and Grammes (2020) for a recent discussion).

Having discussed underpinning principles, further discussion of pedagogical approaches is required to provide adequate guidance for educators.

HOW TO STRUCTURE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Clarke (2001) offers a useful set of questions which learners should be encouraged to apply to any controversial issue before arriving at a viewpoint:

1. What is the issue about?

2. What are the arguments that support different positions?

3. What is assumed? and

4. How are the arguments manipulated and expressed – in what ways are fears, emotions and prejudices exploited or amplified?

The rapid growth of social media in public discourse has reinforced and hardened polarised opinions which are now more accessible than ever before to young learners. This clarifies and increases the imperative on educators to offer alternative ways of thinking in marked contrast to the typical presentations of controversial issues in popular media. The promotion of deliberative and reflective

approaches to controversial issues and the promotion of tentativeness is now an essential element of education for a democratic culture.

Kerr and Huddleston (2017) identify six different pedagogical roles an educator can adopt during a discussion.

1. Making your own views known

2. Act as a neutral chairperson – conceal your own views

3. Present a wide range of different views as clearly as possible

4. Challenge and interrogate learners' views by arguing the opposite from them

5. Support particular learners in the group (the less articulate or weakest voices) by arguing on their behalf

6. Promote the "official" view or policy (within the institution or nationally) on an issue – argue in support of the current law or government position

Educators will recognise that different issues and situations will call for the use of different facilitator roles; for this reason it is not appropriate for a school policy to restrict educators' professional choices to adopt any of the roles above with different groups, at different stages of a debate or on different occasions.

UNACCEPTABLE COMMENTS

Taking account of these analytical frameworks, a further question arises:

What response should an educator make when illegitimate, offensive, extremist or discriminatory views are expressed? Can Beutelsbach principle 1 (not 'overruling, overpowering, suppressing or dominating an expressed opinion') still apply? There are two different approaches:

- LEGAL
  Many countries have equalities legislation that prohibits the expression of racial, homophobic and other abusive views: this may distinguish spoken, broadcast and published forms. Educators should be aware of the requirements in their country and make the legal situation clear to learners – this may be at the start of any discussion in the form of ground rules. It may be necessary to explain that law cannot control thought but seeks to control *behaviour* - which includes what is said or published. Each institution will have policies and rules which should be noted in the discussion and agreement of ground rules.

- HUMAN RIGHTS AND ASSERTION OF VALUES
  When legislation and rules do not prohibit the expression of such views, it helps to discuss,

clarify and agree guidelines before a discussion. The right to 'freedom of speech' has always been understood to be mediated by the responsibility not to damage other people's rights – but the extent of this implied restriction is itself a controversial issue worthy of detailed educational exploration. The needs of certain groups or individuals to be protected from feeling offended or criticised is a worthwhile topic of debate but should be handled with extreme care and attention to the presence of vulnerable group members.

It is therefore appropriate, and consistent with official guidance, for educators to adopt positions which openly support common European values - these are inextricably linked to inclusive democracy (such as equal value of humans, freedom of belief, respect for diversity, justice, equal treatment under the law etc.) – but the term 'democracy' has many definitions and it must be made clear that the claims of some national systems to be called democracies should be tested by the application of these values as criteria or, for a fuller learning experience, through reference to authoritative sources that define the essential requirements for sustainable democracies such as the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (https://www.idea.int/) .

EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Education for a democratic culture must include the development of appropriate skills to debate and form opinions about controversial issues. All learning institutions therefore need to support their staff in successfully managing this learning. This support needs to include training, clear guidelines and opportunities for staff to clarify their own views on certain topics and recognise a range of other opinions. The following points may help in this:

- Clear policy that defines controversial issues, and sets out how they are to be handled;

- Training in the various approaches that may be taken by the education professional when managing group discussions

- Training to ensure they are prepared to support learners through difficult situations that may emerge

- Appropriate resources to stimulate the most effective learning for all levels of ability

- Certainty that they will have the full support of the senior leadership if they face criticism for introducing and managing such discussions

- The educational establishment making it clear to parents and the community that the discussion of controversial issues is essential and necessary as part of the preparation for

living in [or participating in] a democratic society. This needs to be widely publicised (for example, through the website, documentation and statements from senior leaders).

REFERENCES TO POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties play a major role in the democratic system and are entitled to be treated with equal opportunities. Criticism of parties and their policies needs to take place in a clear framework (Behrens et al., 2021):

- **Objectivity**

    o   Criticism needs to be fact based, such as concrete quotes or court judgements

- **Equality**

    o   (especially, but not only before elections): an election vote recommendation is forbidden

- **No blanket neutrality**

    o   Neutrality towards positions (even if they are party-politically supported) that contradict the common European values is not required of teachers.

CASE STUDY: A TEACHER'S COMMENTS ABOUT POLITICIANS WHO DISCRIMINATE

The following example raises the issue of a teacher criticising certain political parties in class. Does this contradict with the Beutelsbach Consensus and the principle of neutrality or is it the teacher's responsibility to challenge discriminatory comments?

In a school in Germany, a teacher was reported by students for criticising the extreme right-wing party Alternative for Germany (AfD). Some members of the party were being monitored by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution for potential abuses. The accusation of the teacher referred to the violation of the Beutelsbach Consensus and the lack of neutrality.

Beutelsbach Consensus does stand for neutrality but does not restrict a teacher from making critical comments. The Consensus stands on the basis of a free democratic order, which includes *"constitutional goals such as the protection of human rights, gender equality, freedom from discrimination in the face of different skin colours, ethnic groups and religions, and tolerance"* (Behrens et al., 2021). A teacher is obliged to represent and support these goals and thus criticize views which directly contradict them (Behrens et al., 2021). A necessary task of school principals is to support their staff by creating a school culture in which teachers dare to speak up against discriminatory statements or actions because they know that they have their principals' full support. Such a culture should be conspicuously promoted in school publications so that parents and others cannot claim that this educational approach is in any way concealed.

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