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UNIT 2

Council of Europe - Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture





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UNIT 2: Council of Europe - Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

INTRODUCING THE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE (RFCDC)

Welcome to our RFCDC module!

- While following this module, you may also access some ideas on our website www.CANDIICE.com for some inspiration.
- This module is divided into different tasks to allow a flexible learning journey.
- All stages may be enriched with slides or animations.
- Each stage is followed by a moment of reflection/ discussion with guiding questions.
- We recommend you use the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* volumes (Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1*; Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 2*; Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 3*) and the CDC portfolios for learners' assessment (Council of Europe, *A Portfolio of Competences for Democratic Culture - Standard Version*; Europe).

INTRODUCTION

It is arguable that discussing the health of democracy nowadays is futile without talking of education. Whilst definitions of a 'working democracy' may be contested, the assertion that education is essential to achieving one is irrefutable. Low voter attendance and increasing anti-social behaviour in some Western countries demonstrate that there is a declining interest and/or confidence in formal democracy and civic responsibility. As societies change, it is crucial to rethink democratic life as a responsibility of the whole population and reflect on the democratic quality and effectiveness of the education of children and young people as democratic citizens.



Education is fundamental for an inclusive democracy and to live together in a plural society. Schooling ethos, structure, and curricula must be democratic on their own so that learners live democracy at school. Schooling is not detached from experiencing democracy in society. Living democracy at school is part of a lifelong process of learning democracy in society.

The Council of Europe posits that educational systems should prepare learners to participate effectively in intercultural dialogue and, simultaneously, in a culture of democracy. To this end, the CoE proposes a conceptual model of 20 competences which enables “citizens to participate effectively in a culture of democracy” (Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1 15*). The *Framework* provides comprehensive guidance for all phases of education.

In this unit we ask:

1. What competences must children develop at school to live and act democratically in a global world?
2. What educational approaches might be most effective for building commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you will have:

1. Learnt about the RFCDC, its principles and main concepts
2. Reflected on approaches to:
learning **through** democracy,
learning **for** democracy and
learning **about** democracy.

TASK 1A: SELF-CHECK QUIZ

1A.1. Suggestion for a warm up

If running this training session for a group you may use a digital app to do the self-check quiz (mentimeter canva...)



- Did you know about the RFCDC before today?
- Have you used any part of the RFCDC? Yes/No.
- If yes, what for? General reference / design new curriculum / plan classes / design a training module / design a coursebook

After the self-check quiz, if you have been using the RFCDC, share your experience with one or two colleagues. If you have never worked with the RFCDC, try to anticipate how a framework that intends to develop democratic competence may be useful in your teaching. Discuss your ideas in pairs and share them with your colleagues.

TASK 1B - INTRODUCTION TO THE RFCDC

1B.1. Suggestion for a warm up

You may use the following video to spark discussion.

- Watch the video clip about the RFCDC
[https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/multimedia#%2298600185%22:\[0\]](https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/multimedia#%2298600185%22:[0])

1B.1. Moments of reflection or discussion.

Use these questions for your own reflection or discussion. Individually or with or two colleagues, reflect and discuss:

- Is it worthwhile (or possible) to promote common democratic values in different countries across Europe through very different school systems?
- Can you think of examples showing how your education setting promotes democratic values?
- What domains of learning does the Council of Europe propose to respond to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by democratic situations?
- What competences must children develop at school to live and act democratically in a global world?
- Are they different from the ones you teach? How?

TASK 2. RFCDC PRINCIPLES AND MAIN CONCEPTS



2.1. Suggestions for a dynamic presentation- The following part may be presented in a set of slides or animation.

2.2. Theoretical suggestion

The CoE argues that the term ‘culture of democracy’ is preferred to ‘democracy:’

- “While democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, such institutions and laws cannot work in practice unless they are grounded in a culture of democracy, that is, in democratic values, attitudes and practices. Among other things, these include a commitment to the rule of law and human rights, a commitment to the public sphere, a conviction that conflicts must be resolved peacefully, acknowledgment of and respect for diversity, a willingness to express one’s own opinions, a willingness to listen to the opinions of others, a commitment to decisions being made by majorities, a commitment to the protection of minorities and their rights, and a willingness to engage in dialogue across cultural divides” (Council of Europe, Competences for Democratic Culture 16).

The CoE principles are:

- Protection of human rights, pluralistic democracy and the rule of law;
- Promotion and awareness of the cultural identity and diversity of Europe;
- Promotion of democracy in Europe;
- Finding common solutions for the challenges in Europe and today’s world.

The CoE advocates that learners should develop intercultural and democratic competence. To better understand the layered relationship between democratic competence and intercultural competence, the CoE explains that intercultural competence is an integral aspect of democratic competence. In multicultural societies, intercultural dialogue is central to democratic processes because citizens need to be able to express their opinions in democratic discussions so that they can contribute to political decision-making on equal grounds, and they also need to be able to listen to, understand and appreciate the points of view of other people who may well have different cultural affiliations from themselves.

- Intercultural competence is a set of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding which enable individuals to understand and respect people from different cultural affiliations, interact and communicate with those people appropriately and effectively and establish constructive relationships with them (Council of Europe, Competences for Democratic Culture 15).
- Democratic competence is the “ability to mobilise and deploy relevant psychological resources (namely values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding) in



- order to respond to appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by democratic situations” (Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1* 32)

A combination of democratic contexts, pedagogies and methodologies should encourage three types of learning:

Learning <i>about</i> democracy	Democracy learning
Learning <i>through</i> democracy	
Learning <i>for</i> democracy	

Three fundamental questions about what, how, and why students should learn democracy are represented here. ‘Learning about democracy’ involves knowledge and critical understanding of content about democracy; ‘Learning through democracy’ implies arrangements and relationships that pervade the learning setting and ensure that learners experience democratic culture and ethos as they learn; and ‘Learning for democracy’ means developing the habits of mind and behaviour of democratic citizens and ensuring the “ability to use one’s capabilities in a given context or situation” (Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1* 16).

2.3. Moments of reflection or discussion

Read the following stimulus questions for reflection and discuss individually or in groups:

- Can you comment on these quotes?

“Education and democracy are organically connected: Democracy is a condition for education and education is a condition for democracy” (van der Ploeg 2).

“A society in which individuals are not able or not allowed to act, cannot expect its schools to produce its democratic citizens for it” (Biesta 16).

- Have a look at the following quote by Dewey. Which type of learning is Dewey referring to: learning about, learning through or learning for democracy?

“I believe that education (...) is a process of living and not a preparation for future living” (Dewey 78).



- How important is it to develop intercultural competence in today's world?

TASK 3. COE 'BUTTERFLY' KEY CONCEPTS: VALUES, ATTITUDES, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

3.1. Suggestions for a warm up

Before projecting the butterfly domains on a slide, deliver each competence printed and cut into separate pieces of paper and ask participants to insert the competences under each domain in the correct wing of an empty butterfly. After completion of the butterfly, project the 20-competence framework (Some competences are very easy to identify, but competences related to skills and attitudes might be difficult to classify).

List of competences

Values

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

Attitudes

- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity

Skills

- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

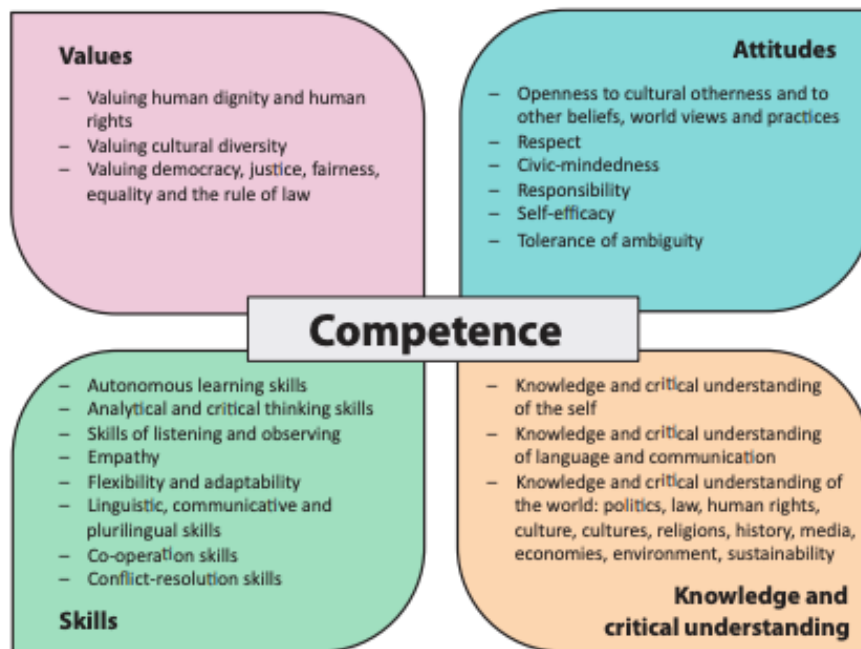


- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

Knowledge and critical understanding

- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability.

The RFCDC butterfly



<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/strengthening-democratic-citizenship-education-in-albania>

3.2. Suggestions for a dynamic presentation

This following part may be presented in a set of slides or animation.



3.3. Theoretical suggestion

The term ‘competences’ refers not only to skills and knowledge, but to a complex interconnection among values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding translated into competent behaviour in democratic and intercultural situations. The CoE proposes a conceptual model of 20 competences that enable “citizens to participate effectively in a culture of democracy” (Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1 15). The 20-competence model is divided into values, attitudes, knowledge and critical thinking.

Values

Values are “general beliefs that individuals hold about the desirable goals that should be striven for in life” (Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1 38) and serve as guiding principles and motivate action. Without them, the framework would only be considered a set of general political competences, instead of democratic competences.

Attitudes

Attitudes are mental orientations which individuals adopt towards someone or something. Values and attitudes are psychological resources “that can be activated, organised and applied through behaviour” (Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1 33) in order to respond to democratic situations.

Skills

Skills are the capacities “for carrying out complex, well-organised patterns of either thinking or behaviour in an adaptive manner in order to achieve a particular end or goal” (Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1 46).

Knowledge and critical understanding

Knowledge is related to sets of information and facts. Critical understanding is the comprehension and appreciation of meanings together with “active reflection on and critical evaluation of that which is understood and interpreted” (Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 1 2).



The organisation of learning and assessment

The demonstration of democratic competences comes out in clusters of competences. Educators should design learning activities to mobilise these competences in clusters.

However, the CoE provided two sets of descriptors to help educators design learning situations and support assessment of the level of democratic competence. The first set comprises 135 descriptors. It intends to present a simple way of disclosing the outcomes, divided into three levels of proficiency: basic, intermediate and advanced. The second set presents 447 descriptors (also organised into three levels of proficiency). The latter intends to bring forward possible learning outcomes with more detail.

3.4. Moments of reflection or discussion

Read the following stimulus questions for reflection and discuss individually or in groups. Present your ideas to the big group.

- To what extent do you design your teaching to develop individual competences as opposed to the covering of knowledge content? Explain.
- In what way can the descriptors help educators design learning activities and assess learners?

TASK 4. THE WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH, RFCDC CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

4.1. Suggestions for a dynamic presentation

The following part may be presented in a set of slides or animation.

4.2. Theoretical suggestion

RFDCDC curriculum

The RFDCDC can be a guide to curricula making at different levels: educational system, school, subject or classroom, and learner. The RFDCDC can be used in whole or in part within any level. However, the RFDCDC proposes a cross-curricular approach to promote democratic



competence, avoiding curriculum overload. The RFCDC can also be used to audit the prescribed curriculum. The curriculum may already target intercultural and democratic competence. This audit may also highlight missing competences in curricula.

The Whole School Approach

Developing democratic competence is important for learners, “but also for schools as institutions and for the community as a whole” (Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 3 90*).

Schools must have a democratic ethos because learners have the opportunity to experience democracy and practise democratic competences together with their classmates and staff. They need to develop a sense of agency and active engagement so that democracy and human rights become a reality in a society. A whole-school approach means that “all aspects of school life- curricula, teaching methods and resources, leadership and decision-making structures and processes, policies and codes of behaviour, staff and student relationships, extracurricular activities and links with the community- reflect democratic and human rights principles.

Assessment

The RFCDC proposes two sets of descriptors for all 20 competences in the model. The descriptors, which are written as learning outcomes, may guide formative and summative assessment. The CoE recommends qualitative assessment, instead of marking and calculating the number of learner’s behaviours.

The Council of Europe (in *Assessing Competences for Democratic Culture*) recommends assessment methods such as:

- Dialogue-based assessment
- Activity-based self-assessment
- Observational assessment
- Oral presentations
- Debate-based assessment
- Role play or simulation assessment
- Dynamic assessment
- Written answers to open-ended questions and essays
- Scenario-based assessment using questioning
- Project-based assessment



- Reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections
- Portfolios and e-portfolios

These methods support learners' reflection on their own learning processes.

4.3. Moments of reflection or discussion

Read the following stimulus questions for reflection and discuss individually or in groups. Present your ideas to the big group.

- Why does the CoE recommend a qualitative assessment method instead of a quantitative method?
- In your teaching practice, which forms of assessment are more common and why?
- Name some steps to implement the whole-school democratic approach?

TASK 5. CREATIVE TEACHING APPROACHES AND THE RFCDC

5.1. Suggestions for a dynamic presentation

The following part may be presented in a set of slides or animation.

5.2. Theoretical suggestion

The CoE states that teachers do not need to “abandon what they are doing” (Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 3 26*). However, to ensure that competences within school-subjects and competences to act democratically are developed, educators may have to develop creative educational approaches.

First, the development of democratic competence may imply focusing on citizenship topics explicitly or implicitly “as a transversal concern integrated into the overall teaching and learning processes taking place in schools within a framework of shared responsibility” (ibid.).

Second, teachers should step aside and give learners autonomy to take initiative and become engaged not only in their own learning but also in collaborative projects. They should also assume their active role in a “community of learning in which they have a voice and manage their own learning. They can participate actively in making decisions on their own learning, when they learn with a co-operative methodology, for instance, developing an attitude of openness to other views and understanding them” (Council of Europe, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 3 23*).



Third, educators together with learners should design interdisciplinary projects and international projects to provide opportunities to develop CDC.

In sum, a democratic environment in the classroom implies learner-centred activities, international communication and collaboration, and critical citizenship issues. Therefore, educators must provide creative democratic educational approaches to integrate these aspects.

Learners should learn about topical critical issues, work collaboratively with classmates and international partners to provide solutions to real-life problems. Learners have increasing opportunities to take action and produce outcomes using digital apps.

Suggestions: Digital apps open many new opportunities+ for creative educational approaches. As learners enjoy engaging with technology, digital apps may be useful tools to develop critical thinking, collaborative decision-making skills and expression of meaning to vast new audiences in diverse and creative modes.

5.3A. Moments of reflection or discussion

Read the following stimulus questions for reflection and discuss individually or in groups. Present your ideas to the big group.



- Think of digital apps that may provide tools to work collaboratively.
- Think of outcomes that learners may produce to respond to critical issues.
- Think of project-based approaches to develop intercultural and democratic competence.



- Think of the ways that internet communications can facilitate opportunities for inter-school and international collaboration, presentation and publication.

5.3B. Moments of reflection or discussion

Watch a video (attached video) and discuss:

- What democratic competences may learners have developed in producing this video to convey a message using a digital app in an international project?

https://www.canva.com/design/DAEsn8eyGFQ/Fo_6t_1JZ52c5HChbikxVQ/watch?utm_content=DAEsn8eyGFQ&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=homepage_design_menu

- What educational approaches might be your next strategy for building democracy, protecting human rights and the rule of law?

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