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UNIT 4

Democratic Competences in the Digital Learning Universe





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UNIT 4: Democratic Competences in the Digital Learning Universe

THE FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY LEARNING USING SOME DIGITAL APPS

- While following this module, you may also access some ideas on our website (wwwCANDIICE.com) for further inspiration.
- This module is divided into different tasks. We encourage you to explore them in any order to find the most appropriate learning journey.
- Each stage is followed by a moment of reflection/ discussion with guiding questions to encourage group interaction.
- We recommend you use the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)* volumes for comprehensive and detailed background information (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).
- See also the CANDIICE Training unit on the RFCDC.

INTRODUCTION

It is a priority to renew human interaction and well-being in this period of post-pandemic education. All schools should refresh their central emphasis on collaborative personal and social education. The CANDIICE project also believes that while doing this it is essential to develop competences for democratic culture for the longer-term well-being of our communities. This unit suggests some ideas for doing this through digital technologies. Using digital applications creatively in the classroom may help learners become citizens who are able to engage responsibly in both online and offline communities and make use of, as yet unknown opportunities for creativity and collaboration in the future.

In this unit we ask:

How can teachers use rapidly changing digital learning opportunities to develop some of the fundamental competences for democratic citizenship?

What digital educational approaches may teachers implement to develop collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking?



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you will have:

Learnt how the RFCDC (CDC) may guide teachers in providing significant democracy learning.

Reflected on approaches to developing collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking.

TASK 1: SELF-CHECK QUIZ

1.1. Suggestion for a warm up – You may use a digital app to do the self-check quiz (Mentimeter...)

- Have your learners been using digital apps in the classroom? How?

After the self-check quiz, if your learners have been using digital apps, share your experience with one or two colleagues. If you have never worked with digital apps in the classroom, try to discuss the possible benefits of digital apps to provide your learners with a wider range of learning opportunities, including the development of democratic competences. Discuss your ideas in pairs and share them with your colleagues.

TASK 2 - DISTORTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

2.1. Suggestion for a warm up –You may use:

- A slide with a regular classroom to spark discussion





- Or listen to “Another brick in the wall” by Pink Floyd.



“Another brick in the wall” lyrics by Pink Floyd

We don't need no education
We dont need no thought control
No dark sarcasm in the classroom
Teachers leave them kids alone
Hey! Teachers! Leave them kids alone!
All in all it's just another brick in the wall.
All in all you're just another brick in the wall.

If necessary, the warm up may lead to the following moment of reflection and discussion.

2.1.1. Moments of reflection or discussion.

Use these questions for reflection or discussion. Individually or with one or two colleagues, reflect and discuss. Present your main conclusions to the big group.

- Please comment on these quotes:

“The problem is that often, and in too many ways, current systems of mass education are a catastrophe in themselves. Far from looking to the future, too often they are facing stubbornly towards the past” (Robinson 47).



“I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school as a place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed. The value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future; the child must do these things for the sake of something else he is to do; they are mere preparation. As a result they do not become a part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative” (Dewey 79).

- What are the main characteristics of a traditional classroom? How well do they provide a space for up-to-date and future learning?

2.2. Suggestions for a dynamic presentation

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

2.3. Theoretical suggestion

Learning in a traditional classroom is no longer the best approach for the 21st century. Within this paradigm, learners usually work individually and learn to be competitive from an individualist point of view. Teachers prepare learners for the exams. Learners are passive receptors of knowledge and have access to limited information selected by the teacher. The traditional classroom still is a place to reproduce old models of society where participation and know-how are under the control of the ‘master.’ Nowadays educators understand that schools need to do more than prepare individuals for the labour market with little emphasis on citizenship participation. The world is facing dramatic changes and the Covid-19 pandemic has come with even greater mischiefs in our democratic society such as false news dissemination, conspiracy theories, xenophobic discourse, growing cruelty in many spheres of life. On the other hand, technological advances, among other changes, are happening so fast that education is not keeping pace. Education must be future-oriented and provide relevant pedagogies. Children and young people need to develop competences that help them become adaptable and versatile for the dynamic changes happening in our world, such as creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration (Fadel et al. 73). The Council of Europe also reminds us that learners need to develop 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). Intercultural and democratic competences are crucial to participate effectively in a culture of democracy in increasingly



diverse communities. Learners need certain values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical thinking ability to respond to democratic situations in multicultural societies.

For a more detailed exploration of the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture please see the RFCDC unit in the CANDIICE Training Pack.

The Council of Europe proposes 20 competences.

Values

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

Attitudes

- Openness 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 of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability.

These competences are translated into descriptors that may serve as a reference for educators when planning educational interventions and to support the assessment of the level of development of democratic competence.

All subjects can support the development of competences for democratic culture. Either through the contents and pedagogies of each school subject or in an interdisciplinary manner.

2.4. Moments of reflection or discussion

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

Given these intertwined competences, the CoE recommends a combination of democratic pedagogies and methodologies under the expressions: learning **about** democracy, learning **through** democracy and learning **for** democracy. Look at the table and discuss with one colleague or two one possible way of completing it with the given expressions. You may add other ideas to the table.

Learning about democracy	Learning through democracy	Learning for democracy
Knowledge and understanding approach	Experiential approach	Skills, orientation, competence



After brainstorming about the CoE recommendations to develop democratic learning, you may use a digital app to make a poll or a Word Cloud (Wordcloud, Free Word Cloud generator, Mentimeter...) to highlight trainees' ideas.

- Answer the following question, inserting just one expression/sentence in the app.

Which part of my teaching contributes most to learning **about**, **for** and **through** democracy?

TASK 3 – NEW OPENINGS FOR DIGITAL CREATIVITY AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

3A.1. Suggestions for a dynamic presentation

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

3A.2. Theoretical suggestion

For the flourishing of social harmony, democracy and intercultural understanding, the humanistic influences on education are of great importance. Knowledge-focused curricula do not prepare learners adequately for today's world. Reading, mathematics, science and language are still foundational, but children and young people also need to learn to respect the Other and work together to solve real-life issues. Curricula should also cultivate an international dimension and a belief in global unity.

Therefore, having in mind 'learning **about**, **for** and **through** democracy' principles, educators should have these suggestions in consideration:

- Employ creative interdisciplinary approaches when designing or planning an educational intervention.
- Plan communication and collaboration with international partners, using eTwinning, for example.
- Provide opportunities to include and value media and culture which learners relate to and engage with.
- Integrate citizenship education and digital technology.
- Provide projects or tasks in which 'divergent thinkers' and learners with additional needs can fully participate.
- Engage learners' interest through varied modes of learning
- Give learners more autonomy and experience of collaborative decision-making and action.



- Involve learners in learning by doing tasks.
- Encourage divergent and creative outcomes.

Digital apps may help implement the suggestions above with a well-designed international project.

3A.3. Moments of reflection or discussion.

Use these questions for reflection or discussion. Individually or with one or two colleagues, reflect and discuss. Present your main conclusions to the big group.

- Read the quote and then use the following questions as a guide for discussion:

“Digital Natives’ (...) possess excellent ability to learn the range of technology in a very short period of time that enable them to get involved into different kinds of activities one at a time using digital media and mobile technology, such as web surfing, text messaging, digital gaming, social networking while listening to music or designing multimedia texts in hybrid forms. Under such a changing climate, it is indispensable that today’s education should bring new dimensions ensuring that it is relevant to the learners’ needs and characteristics.

Teachers and other education practitioners should facilitate learners with multiple skills and knowledge enabling them to survive in the complex and modern world. Therefore, an appropriate pedagogical practice which integrates various technological aspects of learning need to be adopted” (Kustini et al. 220).

- What is your opinion about the author’s description of the ‘digital natives’?
- What problems might teachers face in ‘keeping up-to-date’ with young people’s changing usage of digital technology?
- Is there educational value in crediting learners with some expert knowledge based on their uses of digital technology? Can teachers demonstrate respect and trust by listening to and learning from their students, encouraging them to assume the ‘mantle of the expert’?
- How effectively do you use technology for your educational interventions?



3B.1. Suggestions for a dynamic presentation

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

3B.2. Theoretical suggestion

Digital apps have been used lately for gamification in the classroom. Games introduce elements of uncertainty, competition, immediate feedback (Sun and Hsieh 105), and solitary engagement (Sailer and Homner 80). However, the aims of this module are related to using digital apps to create a multimedia presentation with an educational focus on collaborative and democratic processes to achieve an agreed goal.

Digital apps hold several advantages for democracy learning:

- Fun to work with.
- Provide options so that learners engage in cognitive processes of bridging language skills and digital literacy.
- Require learners to think critically and communicate their own ideas.
- Express meaning in diverse modes.
- Engage in higher order thinking skills.
- Develop collaborative learning.
- Develop creativity.
- Develop narrative/advocacy skills.
- Provide excellent means to create appellative and innovative outcomes.
- Facilitate progress towards better solutions.
- Develop autonomy.
- Improve their knowledge and critical understanding.
- Respect and value other people's opinions.

Using a problem-based or project-based approach, educators may select an appropriate digital app so that learners may work in collaboration with their classmates or/ and international partners, reflect on and discuss a real-life issue or problem, and present an innovative solution to the problem. Using digital apps, learners engage in action, communicate with others and become involved in cooperative activities. In some active citizenship projects learners take action to raise awareness, campaign and advocate solutions to specific issues.



TASK 4 – GUIDANCE ON USING APPS IN YOUR TEACHING

4.1. Suggestions for a dynamic presentation

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

4.2. Theoretical suggestion

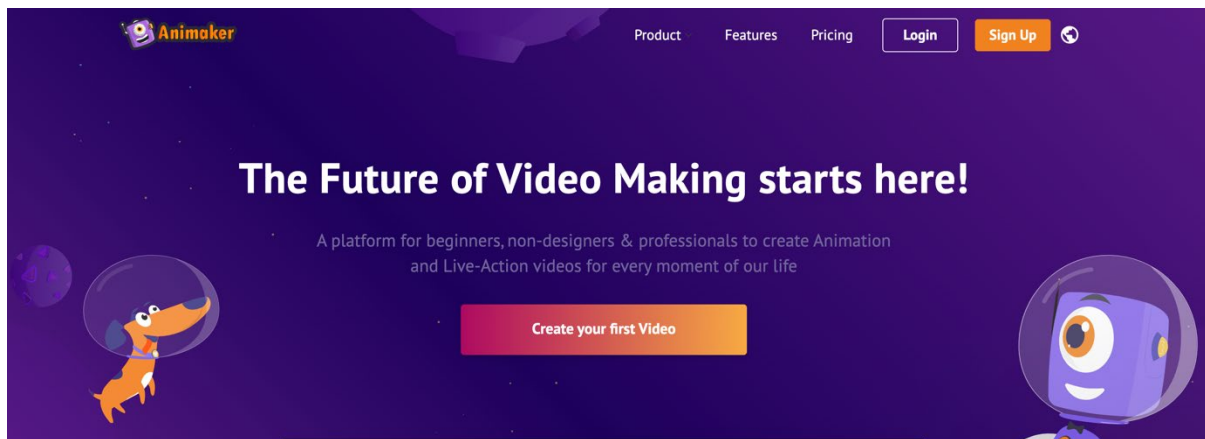
Several applications such as Kahoot have been very popular to enhance motivation and competition in the classroom. However, this training unit presents some apps that allow learners to produce their own work collaboratively towards a common goal. Learners decide upon a desired outcome developing their collaborative decision-making skills. The apps recommended here offer possibilities of using: texts, still and moving images, speech, writing and layout to create impact and meaning. They are also open resources (available for free usage) and adaptable for collaboration and outcome sharing to audiences beyond the school.

4.2.1. Apps characteristics

Features	Book Creator	Animaker	Canva
<i>Open resource</i>	Sign up for free and get one library with 40 books	Free but with a limited number of animated characters to use	A great variety and number of free resources
<i>Kind of outcome</i>	Digital books	Animated presentations videos photos animated characters music backgrounds	Presentations Videos comics posters infographics graphs flyers
<i>Drawing tools</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>Picture banks</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Animation</i>	No	Yes	No
<i>Collaborative tool</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Outcome sharing</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes



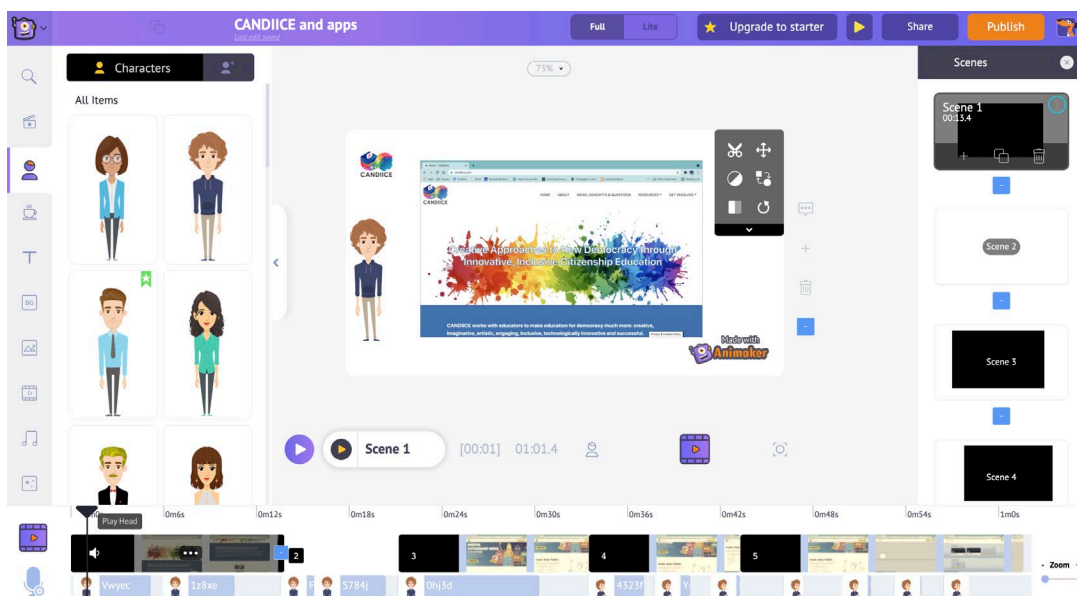
- Animaker - <https://www.animaker.com/>



This free tool is for beginners to create Animation and Live-Action videos. Learners and teachers can produce videos, insert photos, text, music, backgrounds and animation into characters. It provides a wide range of images from free banks such as Pixabay. Learners can animate freely their characters, but there are no drawing tools to design characters. Teachers can invite learners to collaborate by sending an email. As soon as learners get the invitation, they get direct access to the teacher's projects and can edit them. Projects can be downloaded with the Animaker watermark.

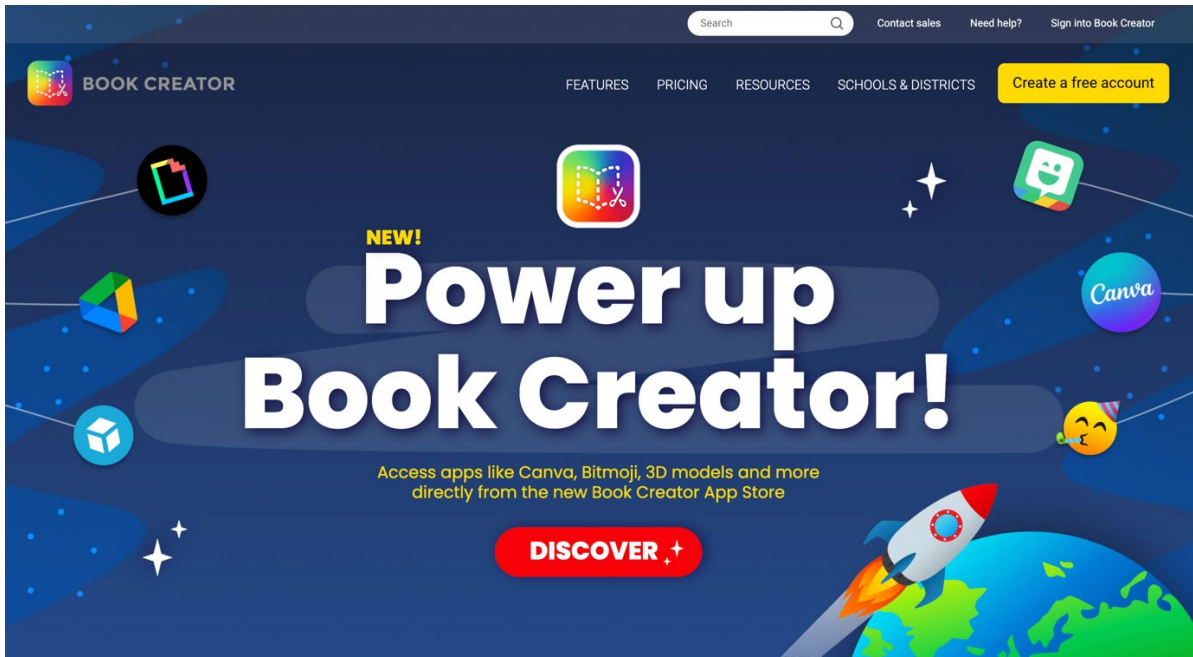
Watch an example:

<https://app.animaker.com/animo/FzrkztS3BINNO9Rs>





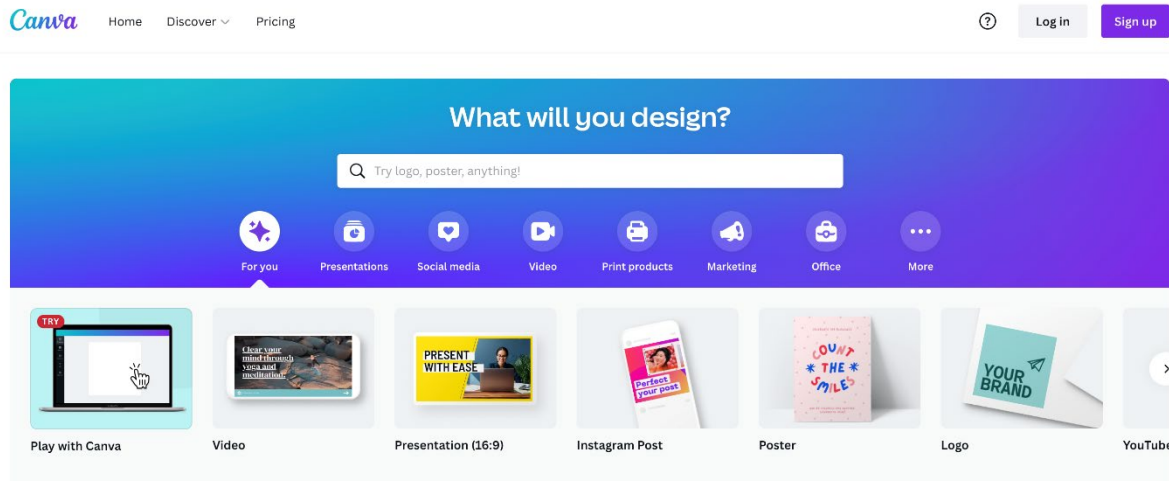
- **Book Creator** - <https://bookcreator.com/>



Teachers can sign up for free and get one library to make up to 40 books, which may be used with learners. In this application teachers and learners can only create digital books. Learners can use drawing tools to create their own characters. They can import photos and write texts. They can also create voice-overs. Learners can collaborate on the same project synchronously or asynchronously. They can also publish the outcome online. Books can be downloaded as presentations. If they want to flip pages, they can only do it online.

Watch an example:

Canva - <https://www.canva.com/>



It is a free tool for classrooms. Teachers and learners can create presentations, videos posters, Instagram posts, comic stories and so much more. It is a very user-friendly application. Canva provides a wide range of free photos and graphics. However, there is no drawing tool, nor is there the possibility of animating characters. There are standard animated characters, though. Learners can invite classmates to collaborate on the same project. The final projects can be downloaded or shared to be watched on any social media.





4.4. Moments of reflection or discussion

Read the following task. You can perform this task individually or in groups:

- Imagine your learners are working with eTwinning partners and you need a digital app so that they can collaborate on the same project. Create an account in each app and explore the suggested tools. Discuss the “learning about, through and for democracy” principles for the educational project with your colleagues and choose one appropriate tool to design an educational intervention with your learners.
- Present your conclusions in a presentation or video using the digital app you selected.

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