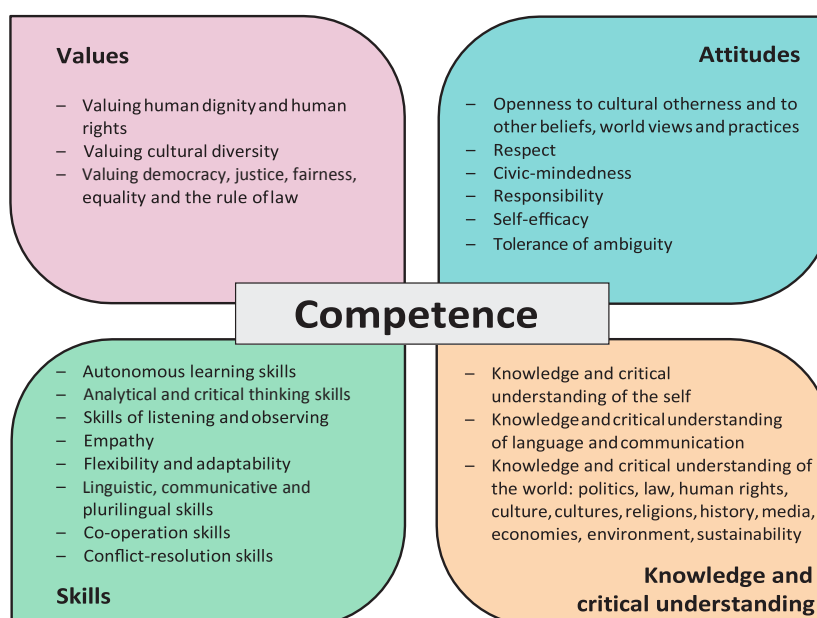# A model of the competences required for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue

Building on its background concepts, the Framework offers a comprehensive conceptual model of the competences that individuals require in order to function as democratically and interculturally competent citizens.

These are therefore the competences that need to be targeted by educators in order to empower learners to act as competent and effective democratic citizens.

There are 20 competences in the model in total. These competences are subdivided into values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. The 20 competences are summarised diagrammatically in Figure 1.[1]

Figure 1: The 20 competences included in the competence model

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

Competence

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 model proposes that, within the context of democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, an individual is deemed to be acting competently when he or she meets the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations appropriately and effectively by mobilising and deploying some or all of these 20 competences. In the following, each of the four groups of competences, as well as all of the individual competences in each group, are described in detail.

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[1] The rationale underlying the competence model, and the process through which these particular competences were identified, are described in full in: Council of Europe (2016), *Competences for democratic culture: living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture.

VALUES

Values are general beliefs that individuals hold about the desirable goals that should be striven for in life. They motivate action and they also serve as guiding principles for deciding how to act. Values transcend specific actions and contexts, and they have a normative prescriptive quality about what ought to be done or thought across many different situations. Values offer standards or criteria for: evaluating actions, both one's own and those of other people; justifying opinions, attitudes and behaviours; deciding between alternatives; planning behaviour; and attempting to influence others.

Readers familiar with other existing competence schemes may be surprised by the appearance of values as a distinct type of competence in the current model. However, it is important to bear in mind that the term "competence" is not being used here in its casual everyday sense as a synonym of "ability", but in a more technical sense to refer to the psychological resources (such as attitudes, skills and knowledge) that need to be mobilised and deployed to meet the demands and challenges of democratic and intercultural situations. Values are one such type of resource. In fact, other competence schemes do often include values but fail to identify them as such and instead merge them with attitudes. By contrast, the current model draws a clear conceptual distinction between values and attitudes, with only the former being characterised by their normative prescriptive quality.

Values are essential in the context of conceptualising the competences that enable participation in a culture of democracy. This is because without a specification of the particular values that underpin these competences, they would not be democratic competences but would instead be more general political competences that could be used in the service of many other kinds of political order, including anti-democratic orders. For example, one could be a responsible, self-efficacious and politically well-informed citizen within a totalitarian dictatorship if a different set of values were to be employed as the foundation for one's judgments, decisions and actions. Thus, the values which the Framework model contains lie at the very heart of democratic competence and are essential for the characterisation of that competence.

There are three sets of values that are crucial for participating in a culture of democracy, as follows.

Valuing human dignity and human rights

This first set of values is based on the general belief that every individual human being is of equal worth, has equal dignity, is entitled to equal respect, and is entitled to the same set of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and ought to be treated accordingly. This belief assumes that: human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible and apply to everyone without distinction; human rights provide a minimum set of protections that are essential for human beings to live a life of dignity; and that human rights provide an essential foundation for freedom, equality, justice and peace in the world. This set of values therefore involves:

1. Recognition that all people share a common humanity and have equal dignity irrespective of their particular cultural affiliations, status, abilities or circumstances.
2. Recognition of the universal, inalienable and indivisible nature of human rights.
3. Recognition that human rights should always be promoted, respected and protected.
4. Recognition that fundamental freedoms should always be defended unless they undermine or violate the human rights of others.
5. Recognition that human rights provide the foundation for living together as equals in society and for freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Valuing cultural diversity

The second set of values is based on the general belief that other cultural affiliations, cultural variability and diversity, and pluralism of perspectives, views and practices ought to be positively regarded, appreciated and cherished. This belief assumes that: cultural diversity is an asset for society; people can learn and benefit from other people's diverse perspectives; cultural diversity should be promoted and protected; people should be encouraged to interact with one another irrespective of their perceived cultural differences; and intercultural dialogue should be used to develop a democratic culture of living together as equals in society.

Note that there is a potential tension between valuing human rights and valuing cultural diversity. In a society which has adopted human rights as its primary value foundation, valuing cultural diversity will have certain limits. These limits are set by the need to promote, respect and protect the human rights and freedoms of other people. Hence, it is assumed here that cultural diversity always ought to be valued unless it undermines the human rights and freedoms of others.

This second set of values therefore involves:

1. Recognition that cultural diversity and pluralism of opinions, world views and practices is an asset for society and provides an opportunity for the enrichment of all members of society.
2. Recognition that all people have the right to be different and the right to choose their own perspectives, views, beliefs and opinions.
3. Recognition that people should always respect the perspectives, views, beliefs and opinions of other people, unless these are directed at undermining the human rights and freedoms of others.
4. Recognition that people should always respect the lifestyles and practices of other people, unless they undermine or violate the human rights and freedoms of others.
5. Recognition that people should listen to and engage in dialogue with those who are perceived to be different from themselves.

Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

The third set of values is based on a cluster of beliefs about how societies ought to operate and be governed, including the beliefs that: all citizens ought to be able to participate equally (either directly or indirectly through elected representatives) in the procedures through which the laws that are used to regulate society are formulated and established; all citizens ought to engage actively with the democratic procedures which operate within their society (allowing that this might also mean not engaging on occasions for reasons of conscience or circumstance); while decisions ought to be made by majorities, the just and fair treatment of minorities of all kinds ought to be ensured; social justice, fairness and equality ought to operate at all levels of society; and the rule of law ought to prevail so that everyone in society is treated justly, fairly, impartially and equally in accordance with laws that are shared by all. This set of values therefore involves:

1. Support for democratic processes and procedures (while recognising that existing democratic procedures may not be optimal and that there may sometimes be a need to change or improve them through democratic means).
2. Recognition of the importance of active citizenship (while recognising that non-participation may sometimes be justified for reasons of conscience or circumstance).
3. Recognition of the importance of citizen engagement with political decision making.

4. Recognition of the need for the protection of civil liberties, including the civil liberties of people who hold minority views.
5. Support for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes.
6. A sense of social justice and social responsibility for the just and fair treatment of all members of society, including equal opportunities for all irrespective of national origins, ethnicity, race, religion, language, age, sex, gender, political opinion, birth, social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation or other status.
7. Support for the rule of law and the equal and impartial treatment of all citizens under the law as a means of ensuring justice.

ATTITUDES

An attitude is the overall mental orientation which an individual adopts towards someone or something (for example a person, a group, an institution, an issue, an event, a symbol). Attitudes usually consist of four components: a belief or opinion about the object of the attitude, an emotion or feeling towards the object, an evaluation (either positive or negative) of the object, and a tendency to behave in a particular way towards that object.

Six attitudes that are important for a culture of democracy are as follows.

Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices

Openness is an attitude towards either people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself or towards world views, beliefs, values and practices that differ from one's own. The attitude of openness towards cultural otherness needs to be distinguished from the attitude of having an interest in collecting experiences of the "exotic" merely for one's own personal enjoyment or benefit. Openness instead involves:

1. Sensitivity towards cultural diversity and to world views, beliefs, values and practices which differ from one's own.
2. Curiosity about, and interest in discovering and learning about, other cultural orientations and affiliations and other world views, beliefs, values and practices.
3. Willingness to suspend judgment and disbelief of other people's world views, beliefs, values and practices, and willingness to question the "naturalness" of one's own world view, beliefs, values and practices.
4. Emotional readiness to relate to others who are perceived to be different from oneself.
5. Willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage, co-operate and interact with those who are perceived to have cultural affiliations that differ from one's own, in a relationship of equality.

Respect

Respect is an attitude towards someone or something (for example a person, a belief, a symbol, a principle, a practice) where the object of that attitude is judged to have some kind of importance, worth or value which warrants positive regard and esteem.[2] Depending on the nature of the object

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[2] Notice that respect is closely linked to values in two ways: a value may be an object of respect (i.e. a value may be respected) and it can also function as a foundation for respect (i.e. one can respect someone or something because they exemplify or put into practice a particular value).

that is respected, the respect may take on very different forms (cf. respect for a school/institution rule versus respect for an elder's wisdom versus respect for nature).

One type of respect that is especially important in the context of a culture of democracy is the respect that is accorded to other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations or different beliefs, opinions or practices from one's own. Such respect assumes the intrinsic dignity and equality of all human beings and their inalienable human right to choose their own affiliations, beliefs, opinions or practices. Importantly, this type of respect does not require minimising or ignoring the actual differences that might exist between the self and the other, which can sometimes be significant and profound, nor does it require agreement with, adoption of or conversion to that which is respected. It is instead an attitude that involves the positive appreciation of the dignity and the right of the other person to hold those affiliations, beliefs, opinions or practices, while nevertheless recognising and acknowledging the differences which exist between the self and the other. An attitude of respect is required to facilitate both democratic interaction and intercultural dialogue with other people. However, it should be noted that limits do need to be placed on respect – for example, respect should not be accorded to the contents of beliefs and opinions, or to lifestyles and practices, which undermine or violate the dignity, human rights or freedoms of others.[3]

The concept of respect reflects better than the concept of tolerance the attitude that is required for a culture of democracy. Tolerance may, in some contexts, convey the connotation of simply enduring or putting up with difference and a patronising stance of tolerating something that one would prefer not to endure. Tolerance may also sometimes be construed as involving an act of power which allows the existence of difference by merely tolerating it, and through this act of tolerance enhancing the power and authority of the tolerating individual. Respect is a less ambiguous concept than tolerance, being based on recognition of the dignity, rights and freedoms of the other and a relationship of equality between the self and the other.

Respect therefore involves:

1.   Positive regard and esteem for someone or something based on the judgment that they have intrinsic importance, worth or value.
2.   Positive regard and esteem for other people as equal human beings who share a common dignity and have exactly the same set of human rights and freedoms irrespective of their particular cultural affiliations, beliefs, opinions, lifestyles or practices.
3.   Positive regard and esteem for the beliefs, opinions, lifestyles and practices adopted by other people, as long as these do not undermine or violate the dignity, human rights or freedoms of others.

Civic-mindedness

Civic-mindedness is an attitude towards a community or social group. The term "community" is used here to denote a social or cultural group that is larger than one's immediate circle of family and friends and to which one feels a sense of belonging. There are numerous types of group that might be relevant

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[3] From a human rights perspective, another person's right to freedom of beliefs should always be respected, but respect cannot be accorded to the contents of beliefs that seek to undermine or violate the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In the case of beliefs where the content cannot be respected, restrictions are placed not on the right to hold the beliefs but on the freedom to manifest those beliefs if such restrictions are necessary for public safety, the protection of public order or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others (see Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights: www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.).

here, for example, the people who live within a particular geographical area (such as a neighbourhood, a town or city, a country, a group of countries such as Europe or Africa, or indeed the world in the case of the "global community"), a more geographically diffused group (such as an ethnic group, faith group, leisure group, sexual orientation group), or any other kind of social or cultural group to which an individual feels a sense of belonging. Every individual belongs to multiple groups, and an attitude of civic- mindedness may be held towards any number of these. Civic-mindedness involves:

1. A feeling of belonging to and identification with the community.
2. Mindfulness of other people in the community, of the interconnectedness between those people, and of the effects of one's actions on those people.
3. A sense of solidarity with other people in the community, including a willingness to co-operate and work with them, feelings of concern and care for their rights and welfare, and a willingness to defend those who might be disempowered and disadvantaged within the community.
4. An interest in, and attentiveness towards, the affairs and concerns of the community.
5. A sense of civic duty, a willingness to contribute actively to community life, a willingness to participate in decisions concerning the affairs, concerns and common good of the community, and a willingness to engage in dialogue with other members of the community regardless of their cultural affiliations.
6. A commitment to fulfil, to the best of one's abilities, the responsibilities, duties or obligations that are attached to the roles or positions which one occupies within the community.
7. A sense of accountability to other people within the community and accepting that one is answerable to others for one's decisions and actions.

Responsibility

The term "responsibility" has many meanings. Two meanings that are especially pertinent to a culture of democracy are role responsibility and moral responsibility. The former is an aspect of civic-mindedness (see above, point 6); here we are concerned with the latter. Moral responsibility is an attitude towards one's own actions. It arises when a person has an obligation to act in a particular way and deserves praise or blame for either performing that act or failing to act in that way. Necessary conditions for individuals to be judged as being either praiseworthy or blameworthy are that they are able to reflect on their own actions, are able to form intentions about how they will act, and are able to execute their chosen actions (hence, when a lack of resources or structural conditions conspire to prevent a person from performing an action, it is inappropriate to ascribe either praise or blame to them). Responsibility can require courage insofar as taking a principled stance may entail acting on one's own, taking action against the norms of a community, or challenging a collective decision that is judged to be wrong. Thus, there can sometimes be a tension between civic-mindedness (construed as solidarity with and loyalty towards other people) and moral responsibility. An attitude of responsibility for one's own actions therefore involves:

1. The adoption of a reflective and thoughtful approach towards one's actions and the possible consequences of those actions.
2. The identification of one's duties and obligations and how one ought to act in relation to a particular situation, based on a value or set of values.[4]

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[4] Hence, the deployment of the attitude of responsibility in democratic and intercultural situations requires the simultaneous deployment of one or more of the three sets of values specified by the current model (i.e. valuing

3. Making decisions about the actions to take (which in some cases might entail not taking action), given the circumstances which apply.
4. The taking of action (or the avoidance of action) accordingly as an autonomous agent.
5. Willingness to hold oneself accountable for the nature or consequences of one's decisions and actions.
6. Willingness to appraise and judge the self.
7. Willingness to act courageously when this is judged to be necessary.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is an attitude towards the self. It involves a positive belief in one's own ability to undertake the actions which are required to achieve particular goals. This belief commonly entails the further beliefs that one can understand what is required, can make appropriate judgments, can select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks, can navigate obstacles successfully, can influence what happens, and can make a difference to the events that affect one's own and other people's lives.

Thus, self-efficacy is associated with feelings of self-confidence in one's own abilities. Low self-efficacy can discourage democratic and intercultural behaviour even when there is a high level of ability, while unrealistically high self-efficacy can lead to frustration and disappointment. An optimal attitude is relatively high self-efficacy coupled to a realistically estimated high level of ability, which encourages individuals to tackle new challenges and enables them to take action on issues of concern. Thus, self-efficacy involves:

1. Belief in one's ability to understand issues, to make judgments and to select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks.
2. Belief in one's ability to organise and execute the courses of action required to attain particular goals, and to navigate the obstacles that might arise.
3. A feeling of confidence about tackling new challenges.
4. A feeling of confidence about democratic engagement and undertaking the actions judged to be necessary to achieve democratic goals (including challenging and holding to account those in positions of power and authority when their decisions or actions are judged to be unfair or unjust).
5. A feeling of confidence about engaging in intercultural dialogue with those who are perceived to have cultural affiliations that differ from one's own.

Tolerance of ambiguity

Tolerance of ambiguity is an attitude towards objects, events and situations which are perceived to be uncertain and subject to multiple conflicting or incompatible interpretations. People who have high tolerance of ambiguity evaluate these kinds of objects, events and situations in a positive manner, willingly accept their inherent lack of clarity, are willing to admit that other people's perspectives may be just as adequate as their own perspectives, and deal with the ambiguity constructively. Hence, the term "tolerance" should be understood here in its positive sense of accepting and embracing ambiguity (rather than in its negative sense of enduring or putting up with ambiguity). People who

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human dignity and human rights, valuing cultural diversity, or valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law). In the absence of the simultaneous deployment of one or more of these sets of values, responsibility would not be a democratic competence but a more general political competence instead (cf. the introductory text on values above).

have low tolerance of ambiguity instead adopt a single perspective on unclear situations and issues, hold a closed attitude towards unfamiliar situations and issues, and use fixed and inflexible categories for thinking about the world. Thus, in the present context, tolerance of ambiguity involves:

1. Recognition and acknowledgement that there can be multiple perspectives on and interpretations of any given situation or issue.
2. Recognition and acknowledgement that one's own perspective on a situation may be no better than other people's perspectives.
3. Acceptance of complexity, contradictions and lack of clarity.
4. Willingness to undertake tasks when only incomplete or partial information is available.
5. Willingness to tolerate uncertainty and to deal with it constructively.

SKILLS

A skill is the capacity for carrying out complex, well-organised patterns of either thinking or behavior in an adaptive manner in order to achieve a particular end or goal.

There are eight sets of skills that are important for a culture of democracy, as follows.

Autonomous learning skills

Autonomous learning skills are those skills that individuals require to pursue, organise and evaluate their own learning, in accordance with their own needs, in a self-directed and self-regulated manner, without being prompted by others. Autonomous learning skills are important for a culture of democracy because they enable individuals to learn for themselves about, and how to deal with, political, civic and cultural issues using multiple and diverse sources both far and near, rather than relying on agents in their immediate environment for the provision of information about these issues. Autonomous learning skills include abilities or skills in:

1. Identifying one's own learning needs – these needs may stem from gaps in knowledge or understanding, from lack or poor mastery of skills, or from difficulties that have arisen as a consequence of current attitudes or values.
2. Identifying, locating and accessing possible sources of the information, advice or guidance which is required to address these needs – these sources could include personal experiences, interactions and discussions with others, encounters with people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own or who hold different beliefs, opinions or world views from one's own, and visual, print, broadcast and digital media sources.
3. Judging the reliability of the various sources of information, advice or guidance, assessing them for possible bias or distortion, and selecting the most suitable sources from the range available.
4. Processing and learning the information, using the most appropriate learning strategies and techniques, or adopting and following the advice or guidance, from the most reliable sources, making adjustments to one's existing repertoire of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes or values accordingly.
5. Thinking about what has been learned, the progress that has been made, evaluating the learning strategies that have been used, and drawing conclusions about further learning that may still need to be undertaken and new learning strategies that may need to be acquired.

Analytical and critical thinking skills

Analytical and critical thinking skills consist of a large and complex cluster of inter-related skills. Analytical thinking skills are those skills that are required to analyse materials of any kind (for example texts, arguments, interpretations, issues, events, experiences) in a systematic and logical manner. They include abilities or skills in:

1. Systematically breaking down the materials that are under analysis into constituent elements, and organising those elements in a logical manner.
2. Identifying and interpreting the meaning(s) of each element, possibly by comparing and relating those elements to what is already known and identifying similarities and differences.
3. Examining the elements in relation to each other and identifying the connections that exist between them (e.g. logical, causal, temporal).
4. Identifying any discrepancies, inconsistencies or divergences between elements.
5. Identifying alternative possible meanings and relationships for individual elements, generating new elements that may be missing from the whole, systematically changing elements to determine effects on the whole, and generating new syntheses of the elements that have been examined – in other words, imagining and exploring novel possibilities and alternatives.
6. Drawing the results of the analysis together in an organised and coherent manner to construct logical and defensible conclusions about the whole.

Critical thinking skills consist of those skills that are required to evaluate and make judgments about materials of any kind. They therefore include abilities or skills in:

1. Making evaluations on the basis of internal consistency, and on the basis of consistency with available evidence and experience.
2. Making judgments about whether or not materials under analysis are valid, accurate, acceptable, reliable, appropriate, useful and/or persuasive.
3. Understanding and evaluating the preconceptions, assumptions and textual or communicative conventions upon which materials are based.
4. Engaging not only with the literal meaning of materials, but also with their broader rhetorical purpose including the underlying motives, intentions and agendas of those who produced or created them (in the case of political communications, this includes the ability to identify propaganda and the ability to deconstruct the underlying motives, intentions and purposes of those who have produced the propaganda).
5. Situating the materials within the historical context in which they have been produced in order to assist in making evaluative judgments about the materials.
6. Generating and elaborating different alternative options, possibilities and solutions to those that are present within the materials under consideration.
7. Weighing up the pros and cons of the available options – this can include cost-benefit analysis (incorporating both short-term and long-term perspectives), resource analysis (assessing whether the resources required for each option are available in practice) and risk analysis (understanding and assessing the risks associated with each option and how they might be managed).
8. Drawing the results of the evaluative process together in an organised and coherent manner to construct a logical and defensible argument for or against a particular interpretation, conclusion or course of action, based on explicit and specifiable criteria, principles or values and/or compelling evidence.

9. Recognising one's own assumptions and preconceptions that might have biased the evaluative process and acknowledging that one's beliefs and judgments are always contingent and dependent upon one's own cultural affiliations and perspective.

Effective analytical thinking incorporates critical thinking (the evaluation of the materials under analysis), while effective critical thinking incorporates analytical thinking (drawing distinctions and making connections). For this reason, analytical and critical thinking skills are inherently linked together.

Skills of listening and observing

Skills of listening and observing are the skills that are required to understand what other people are saying and to learn from other people's behaviour. Understanding what other people are saying requires active listening – paying close attention not only to what is being said but also to how it is being said through the use of tone, pitch, loudness, rate and fluency of voice, and paying close attention to the person's accompanying body language, especially their eye movements, facial expressions and gestures. Close observational scrutiny of other people's behaviour can also be an important source of information about the behaviours that are most appropriate and effective in different social settings and cultural contexts and can assist a learner in mastering those behaviours through the retention of that information and replicating the other person's behaviour in later similar situations. Thus, skills of listening and observing include abilities or skills in:

1. Attending not only to what is being said but also to how it is being said and to the body language of the speaker.
2. Attending to possible inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal messages.
3. Attending to subtleties of meaning and to what might be only partially said or indeed left unsaid.
4. Attending to the relationship between what is being said and the social context in which it is said.
5. Paying close attention to the behaviour of other people and retaining information about that behaviour, particularly the behaviour of others who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own.
6. Paying close attention to the similarities and the differences in how people react to the same situation, particularly people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one another.

Empathy

Empathy is the set of skills required to understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and to see the world from other people's perspectives. Empathy involves the ability to step outside one's own psychological frame of reference (to decentre from one's own perspective) and the ability to imaginatively apprehend and understand the psychological frame of reference and perspective of another person. This skill is fundamental to imagining the cultural affiliations, world views, beliefs, interests, emotions, wishes and needs of other people. There are several different forms of empathy that can be distinguished, including:

1. Cognitive perspective-taking – the ability to apprehend and understand the perceptions, thoughts and beliefs of other people.

2. Affective perspective-taking – the ability to apprehend and understand the emotions, feelings and needs of other people.

3. Sympathy, sometimes called "compassionate empathy" or "empathic concern"– the ability to experience feelings of compassion and concern for other people based on the apprehension of their cognitive or affective state or condition, or their material situation or circumstances.[5]

Flexibility and adaptability

Flexibility and adaptability are the skills that are required to adjust one's thoughts, feelings or behaviours in a principled manner to new contexts and situations so that one can respond effectively and appropriately to their challenges, demands and opportunities. Flexibility and adaptability enable individuals to adjust positively to novelty and change and to other people's social or cultural expectations, communication styles and behaviours. They also enable individuals to adjust their pat- terns of thinking, feeling or behaviour in response to new situational contingencies, experiences, encounters and information. Flexibility and adaptability, defined in this way, need to be distinguished from the unprincipled or opportunistic adjustment of behaviour for personal benefit or gain. They also need to be distinguished from externally coerced adaptation.[6] Thus, flexibility and adaptability include abilities or skills in:

1. Adjusting one's habitual way of thinking due to changing circumstances, or temporarily shifting into a different cognitive perspective in response to cultural cues.
2. Reconsidering one's own opinions in the light of new evidence and/or rational argument.
3. Controlling and regulating one's own emotions and feelings in order to facilitate more effective and appropriate communication and co-operation with others.
4. Overcoming anxieties, worries and insecurities about meeting and interacting with other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own.
5. Regulating and reducing negative feelings towards members of another group with which one's own group has historically been in conflict.

6. Adjusting one's behaviour in a socially appropriate way according to the prevailing cultural environment.

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[5] Note the positioning of empathy as a skill in the current model. The term "empathy" is of course also used in many other ways in everyday discourse. For example, it is sometimes used when a person experiences the same emotion that another person is feeling (i.e. the phenomenon of "emotional contagion", where a person "catches" and shares another person's joy, panic, fear, etc.), sometimes to refer to a sense of emotional connectedness or identification with another person (e.g. "I had a lot of empathy for the leading character in the book") and sometimes to refer to the compassion or concern for another person that results from sympathy (e.g. "I feel empathy for you in your current predicament"). The term "empathy" is also sometimes used to refer to a much larger cluster of responses that one may have to another person in which openness to the other, respect for the other, cognitive and emotional engagement with the other, and feelings of emotional connection to the other are co-mingled. The present model instead uses the term "empathy" in a more specific and focused manner to denote the set of skills that are required to understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, this being a crucial set of skills for participating in a culture of democracy. This definition is not intended to preclude the possible simultaneous mobilisation and deployment of empathy, openness, respect, etc., as an entire cluster of competences or capacities in some situations.
[6] For example, the enforced assimilation of cultural minorities to a majority culture should never be condoned. All individuals have a fundamental right to choose their own cultural affiliations, beliefs and lifestyle (see footnote 3).

7. Adapting to different communication styles and behaviours and switching to appropriate communication styles and behaviours to avoid violating the cultural norms of others and to communicate with them through means which they are able to understand.

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills[7]

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills are those skills that are required to communicate effectively and appropriately with other people. They include the following abilities and skills, among others:[8]

1. The ability to communicate clearly in a range of situations – this includes expressing one's beliefs, opinions, interests and needs, explaining and clarifying ideas, advocating, promoting, arguing, reasoning, discussing, debating, persuading and negotiating.
2. The ability to meet the communicative demands of intercultural situations by using more than one language or language variety or by using a shared language or lingua franca to understand another language.
3. The ability to express oneself confidently and without aggression, even in situations where one is disadvantaged through a disparity of power, and to express a fundamental disagreement with another person in a manner that is nevertheless respectful of that person's dignity and rights.
4. The ability to recognise the different forms of expression and the different communicative conventions (both verbal and non-verbal) in the communications employed by other social groups and their cultures.
5. The ability to adjust and modify one's communicative behaviour so that one uses the communicative conventions (both verbal and non-verbal) that are appropriate to one's interlocutor(s) and to the prevailing cultural setting.
6. The ability to ask questions of clarification in an appropriate and sensitive manner in cases where the meanings being expressed by another person are unclear or where inconsistencies between the verbal and non-verbal messages produced by another person are detected.
7. The ability to manage breakdowns in communication, for example by requesting repetitions or reformulations from others, or providing restatements, revisions or simplifications of one's own misunderstood communications.
8. The ability to act as a linguistic mediator in intercultural exchanges, including skills in translating, interpreting and explaining, and to act as an intercultural mediator by assisting others to understand and appreciate the characteristics of someone or something that is perceived to have a different cultural affiliation from their own.

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[7] The term "language" is used in the Framework to denote all linguistic systems, whether recognised as languages or considered to be varieties of recognised languages, irrespective of modality. It includes spoken and signed language and all other forms of non-spoken language. The terms "verbal" and "non-verbal" communication in this context therefore mean, respectively, "communication effected by means of language" and "communication effected by means other than language".

[8] First and foremost, of course, effective and appropriate communication requires linguistic skills (to produce and comprehend spoken and written sentences and utterances), sociolinguistic skills (to process accent, dialect, register and the linguistic markers of social relations between speakers) and discourse skills (to construct longer coherent stretches of language through the use of appropriate communicative conventions, and to deploy spoken discourse and written texts for particular communicative purposes). However, because these are generic skills (as are numeracy and literacy), they have been omitted from the Framework model. Readers who are interested   in a detailed account of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills should instead consult the Council of Europe's (2001) Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, where they are described at length.

Co-operation skills

Co-operation skills are those skills that are required to participate successfully with others on shared activities, tasks and ventures. They include abilities or skills in:

1. Expressing views and opinions in group settings and encouraging other group members to express their views and opinions in such settings.
2. Building consensus and compromise within a group.
3. Taking action together with others in a reciprocal and co-ordinated manner.
4. Identifying and setting group goals.
5. Pursuing the goals of a group and adapting one's own behaviour for the purpose of achieving these goals.
6. Appreciating all group members' talents and strengths and helping others to develop in areas where they need to and want to improve.
7. Encouraging and motivating other group members to co-operate and help each other in order to achieve group goals.
8. Helping others with their work where appropriate.
9. Sharing relevant and useful knowledge, experience or expertise with the group and persuading other group members to do so.
10. Recognising conflict in group settings, including identifying emotional signs of conflict in the self and in others, and responding appropriately using peaceful means and dialogue.

Conflict-resolution skills

Conflict-resolution skills are those skills that are required to address, manage and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way. They include abilities or skills in:

1. Reducing or preventing aggression and negativity and creating a neutral environment in which people feel free to express their differing opinions and concerns without fear of reprisal.
2. Encouraging and enhancing receptivity, mutual understanding and trust between conflicting parties.
3. Recognising differences in the power and/or status of the conflicting parties and taking steps to reduce the possible impact of such differentials on communications between them.
4. Effectively managing and regulating emotions – the ability to interpret one's own underlying emotional and motivational states as well as those of others, and to deal with emotional stress, anxiety and insecurity both in oneself and in others.
5. Listening to and understanding the different perspectives of the parties involved in conflicts.
6. Expressing and summarising the different points of view held by conflicting parties.
7. Countering or reducing misperceptions held by conflicting parties.
8. Recognising that sometimes there may be a need for a period of silence, a truce or a period of inaction, to allow the conflicting parties to reflect on the perspectives that are held by others.
9. Identifying, analysing, relating and contextualising the causes and other aspects of conflicts.
10. Identifying common ground on which agreement between conflicting parties can be built, identifying options for resolving conflicts, and refining possible compromises or solutions.
11. Assisting others to resolve conflicts by enhancing their understanding of the available options.
12. Assisting and guiding the parties involved to agree on an optimal and accept- able solution to the conflict.

KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

Knowledge is the body of information that is possessed by a person, while understanding is the comprehension and appreciation of meanings. The term "critical understanding" is used to emphasise the need for the comprehension and appreciation of meanings in the context of democratic processes and intercultural dialogue to involve active reflection on and critical evaluation of that which is being understood and interpreted (as opposed to automatic, habitual and unreflective interpretation).

The various forms of knowledge and critical understanding that are required for a culture of democracy fall into three main sets, as follows.

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

Self-awareness and self-understanding are vital for participating effectively and appropriately in a culture of democracy. Knowledge and critical understanding of the self has many different aspects, including:

1. Knowledge and understanding of one's own cultural affiliations.
2. Knowledge and understanding of one's perspective on the world and of its cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects and biases.
3. Knowledge and understanding of the assumptions and preconceptions which underlie one's perspective on the world.
4. Understanding how one's perspective on the world, and one's assumptions and preconceptions, are contingent and dependent upon one's cultural affiliations and experiences, and in turn affect one's perceptions, judgments and reactions to other people.
5. Awareness of one's own emotions, feelings and motivations, especially in contexts involving communication and co-operation with other people.
6. Knowledge and understanding of the limits of one's own competence and expertise.

Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication have many different aspects, and include:

1. Knowledge of the socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions which operate in the language(s) which one uses.
2. Understanding that people of other cultural affiliations may follow different verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions from oneself, which are meaningful from their perspective, even when they are using the same language as oneself.
3. Understanding that people who have different cultural affiliations can perceive the meanings of communications in different ways.
4. Understanding that there are multiple ways of speaking in any given language and a variety of ways of using the same language.
5. Understanding how the use of language is a cultural practice which operates as a carrier of information, meanings and identities which circulate in the culture in which that language is embedded.
6. Understanding of the fact that languages may express culturally shared ideas in a unique way or express unique ideas which may be difficult to access through another language.

7. Understanding the social impact and effects on others of different communication styles, including understanding how different communication styles may clash or result in a breakdown of communication.

8. Understanding how one's own assumptions, preconceptions, perceptions, beliefs and judgments are related to the specific language(s) which one speaks.

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (including politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment and sustainability)

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world subsumes a large and complex range of knowledge and understanding in a variety of domains, including all of the following.

(a) Knowledge and critical understanding of politics and law, which includes:

1. Knowledge and understanding of political and legal concepts, including democracy, freedom, justice, equality, citizenship, rights and responsibilities, the necessity of laws and regulations, and the rule of law.

2. Knowledge and understanding of democratic processes, of how democratic institutions work, including the roles of political parties, election processes and voting.

3. Knowledge and understanding of the diverse ways in which citizens can participate in public deliberations and decision making and can influence policy and society, including understanding of the role that civil society and NGOs can play in this regard.

4. Understanding power relations, political disagreement and conflict of opinion in democratic societies, and of how such disagreements and conflicts can be peacefully resolved.

5. Knowledge and understanding of current affairs, contemporary social and political problems, and the political views of others.

6. Knowledge and understanding of contemporary threats to democracy.

(b) Knowledge and critical understanding of human rights, which includes:

1. Knowledge and understanding that human rights are grounded in the dignity that is inherent in all human beings.

2. Knowledge and understanding that human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible, and that everyone does not only have human rights but also has a responsibility to respect the rights of others, irrespective of their national origins, ethnicity, race, religion, language, age, sex, gender, political opinion, birth, social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation or other status.

3. Knowledge and understanding of the obligations of states and governments in relation to human rights.

4. Knowledge and understanding of the history of human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5. Knowledge and understanding of the relationship between human rights, democracy, freedom, justice, peace and security.

6. Knowledge and understanding that there may be different ways of interpreting and experiencing human rights in different societies and cultures but that the possible variations are framed by internationally agreed legal instruments which set out minimum standards for human rights irrespective of cultural context.

7. Knowledge and understanding of how human rights principles are applied in practice to specific situations, how violations of human rights can arise, how violations of human rights can be addressed, and how possible conflicts between human rights can be resolved.

8. Knowledge and understanding of critical human rights challenges in the world today.

(c) Knowledge and critical understanding of culture and cultures, which includes:

1. Knowledge and understanding of how people's cultural affiliations shape their world views, preconceptions, perceptions, beliefs, values, behaviours and interactions with others.

2. Knowledge and understanding that all cultural groups are internally variable and heterogeneous, do not have fixed inherent characteristics, contain individuals who contest and challenge traditional cultural meanings, and are constantly evolving and changing.

3. Knowledge and understanding of how power structures, discriminatory practices and institutional barriers within and between cultural groups operate to restrict opportunities for disempowered individuals.

4. Knowledge and understanding of the specific beliefs, values, norms, practices, discourses and products that may be used by people who have particular cultural affiliations, especially those used by people with whom one interacts and communicates and who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself.

(d) Knowledge and critical understanding of religions, which includes:

1. Knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of the history of particular religious traditions, of the key texts and key doctrines of particular religious traditions, and of the commonalities and differences which exist between different religious traditions.

2. Knowledge and understanding of religious symbols, religious rituals and the religious uses of language.

3. Knowledge and understanding of the key features of the beliefs, values, practices and experiences of individuals who practise particular religions.

4. Understanding of the fact that the subjective experience and personal expressions of religions are likely to differ in various ways from the standard textbook representations of those religions.

5. Knowledge and understanding of the internal diversity of beliefs and practices which exists within individual religions.

6. Knowledge and understanding of the fact that all religious groups contain individuals who contest and challenge traditional religious meanings, do not have fixed inherent characteristics, and are constantly evolving and changing.

(e) Knowledge and critical understanding of history, which includes:

1. Knowledge and understanding of the fluid nature of history and of how interpretations of the past vary over time and across cultures.

2. Knowledge and understanding of particular narratives from different perspectives about the historical forces and factors that have shaped the contemporary world.

3. Understanding of the processes of historical investigation, in particular of how facts are selected and constructed, and how they become evidence in the production of historical narratives, explanations and arguments.

4. Understanding of the need to access alternative sources of information about history because the contributions of marginalised groups (e.g. cultural minorities and women) are often excluded from standard historical narratives.
5. Knowledge and understanding of how histories are often presented and taught from an ethnocentric point of view.
6. Knowledge and understanding of how the concepts of democracy and citizen- ship have evolved in different ways in different cultures over time.
7. Knowledge and understanding of how stereotyping is a form of discrimination that has been used to deny individuality and diversity to human beings and to undermine human rights, and in some cases has led to crimes against humanity.
8. Understanding and interpreting the past in the light of the present with a view to the future and understanding the relevance of the past to concerns and issues in the contemporary world.

(f) Knowledge and critical understanding of the media, which includes:

1. Knowledge and understanding of the processes through which the mass media select, interpret and edit information before transmitting it for public consumption.
2. Knowledge and understanding of the mass media as commodities that involve producers and consumers, and of the possible motives, intentions and purposes that the producers of content, images, messages and advertisements for the mass media may have.
3. Knowledge and understanding of digital media, of how digital media content, images, messages and advertisements are produced, and of the various possible motives, intentions and purposes of those who create or reproduce them.
4. Knowledge and understanding of the effects that mass media and digital media content can have on individuals' judgments and behaviours.
5. Knowledge and understanding of how political messages, propaganda and hate speech in the mass media and digital media are produced, how these forms of communication can be identified, and how individuals can guard and protect themselves against the effects of these communications.

(g) Knowledge and critical understanding of economies, the environment and sustainability, which includes:

1. Knowledge and understanding of economies and of the economic and financial processes that affect the functioning of society, including the relationship between employment, earnings, profit, taxation and government expenditure.
2. Knowledge and understanding of the relationship between income and expenditure, the nature and consequences of debt, the real cost of loans, and the risk of loans beyond repayment capacity.
3. Knowledge and understanding of the economic interdependence of the global community and of the impact that personal choices and patterns of consumption may have in other parts of the world.
4. Knowledge and understanding of the natural environment, the factors that can impact on it, the risks associated with environmental damage, current environmental challenges, and the need for responsible consumption and environmental protection and sustainability.
5. Knowledge and understanding of the connections between economic, social, political and environmental processes, especially when viewed from a global perspective.
6. Knowledge and understanding of the ethical issues associated with globalisation.

The concept of clusters of competences revisited

As noted earlier, according to the Framework, these 20 competences are rarely mobilised and deployed individually. Instead, competent behaviour is much more likely to involve the simultaneous or sequential activation and application of an entire cluster of competences in a dynamic and orchestrated manner, which enables the individual to adapt appropriately and effectively to the specific demands and challenges that are presented by a given situation. The competences in any given cluster are drawn variably from across the full range of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding. This means that users of the Framework need to pay careful attention to all four groups of competences when designing a new educational curriculum.

It may be the case that not all 20 competences can be included in the curriculum. This could be a consequence of limitations in the material resources that are available to educators or limitations of time. Alternatively, there could be policy considerations which dictate that some of the competences are a higher priority to target than others, or there may be broader political or cultural concerns which mean that it is not acceptable to target a particular competence through education.

If decisions are taken to omit particular competences from a curriculum, users of the Framework should bear in mind the following two considerations. First, insofar as competent behaviour requires an individual to draw on an entire cluster of competences, if that individual has not been equipped with the full range of competences, there will inevitably be some situations in which he or she will be unable to respond competently. Users of the Framework need to factor into their decision making the consequences of omitting particular competences from a curriculum.

Second, consideration should also be given to whether the omissions might undermine the overall rationale of the Framework, which is to promote and protect democracy, human rights and intercultural dialogue. For example, omitting all the values would mean that learners will be equipped not with democratic competence but with a more general political competence which, as has been noted already, could be used in the service of non-democratic political regimes (in other words, omitting values from the curriculum does not necessarily render knowledge and skills neutral). Alternatively, focusing solely on skills, knowledge and critical understanding, and omitting all the values and attitudes, would mean that, while learners may be equipped with the relevant skills, knowledge and critical understanding, they might have little disposition or inclination to use them in practice because it is precisely the values and attitudes which predispose people to use their skills, knowledge and critical understanding.

In short, great care should be taken over omitting particular competences from a curriculum. Such decisions should only be made in the light of a full examination of the likely consequences of the proposed omissions.