



FREE to SPEAK, SAFE to LEARN **Democratic schools for all**

Council of Europe pre-launch campaign survey – Spring 2018 **Final report**

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1 General information

The Council of Europe survey on citizenship and human rights education serves as a qualitative basis for supporting the Council of Europe campaign FREE to SPEAK, SAFE to LEARN. It was conducted to form an approximate picture of the estimated importance and the perceived extent of implementation of the different elements of citizenship and human rights education by practitioners in schools of Council of Europe member States. Due to its limited scope the survey did not aim at delivering scientific results on the current situation of all schools but at grasping the general opinions and practices that practitioners connect with democracy and human rights education. The survey not only asked practitioners for their subjective ratings concerning the importance and extent of elements and principles used in the schools (part I) but also asked them to share their good practice examples with the Council of Europe (part II).

A total of 2,324 participants filled in part I of the survey. From among this number, 1,741 valid answers could be counted for each item. Around 610 participants filled in the questionnaire but skipped the majority of questions. Nevertheless, this can be viewed as quite a high return rate considering the nature and position of citizenship and human rights education as a cross-curricular subject in schools all over Europe. A total of 748 participants filled in part II of the questionnaire, sharing information on their practices in schools. The number of valid questionnaires for this part of the survey was 549. Bearing in mind that the numbers do not represent all schools in all member States of the Council of Europe, the collected answers give a qualitative insight into the subjective estimations and the perceived reality in their schools. Therefore, the survey cannot be viewed as giving a full picture of the situation of citizenship and human rights education in European schools, but certain trends can be visible and can serve as a foundation and starting point for a joint discussion among practitioners, different stakeholders and policy makers.



Furthermore, it seems important to note the different approach towards democracy and human rights education from “new” democracies and “old” democracies. For traditional Western democracies,

education for democratic citizenship happens somehow implicitly and less visibly than in the newly transformed political systems. Individuals in these democratic systems are generally more aware and conscious of implementing and living democratic principles in their professions as well as in their daily lives.

2 Results of the analysis of parts I and II of the survey

2.1 What is important for EDC/HRE and how is it realised in the schools?

The following compilation reflects the major trends revealed by the analysis of the gathered data. The two categories of questions – *importance* and perceived *extent* of practice in schools – are again grouped and the ratings are compared within this group. In general, it can be stated that practitioners rate the different elements of EDC/HRE to be very important or important. The question about how these elements are practised in schools is the main point of interest. For most elements, the ratings for the majority of the perceived extent of practice in schools show a decline. It can therefore be assumed that practitioners are highly aware of the elements included in democracy and human rights education but that there is still potential for development in some areas of the way they are practised in the school context. The following descriptions follow an approach that looks at the micro-system of the teaching and learning context in the classroom, the meso-system of the school as an organisation and the way EDC/HRE is integrated, and the macro-level of opening the school to the community, authorities or other stakeholders. The following diagram illustrates these levels and shows some of the elements. A complete collection can be found in the annex to this report.

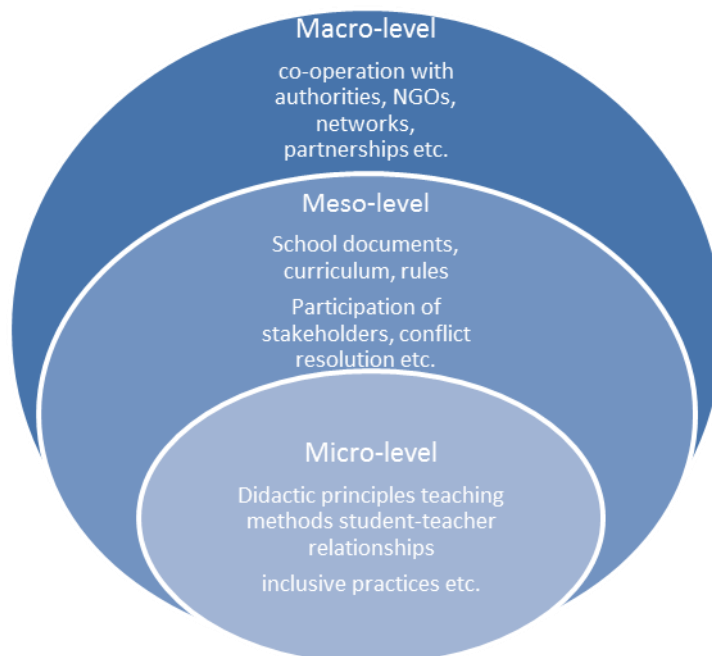


Diagram 1: The different levels of EDC/HRE

Some of the elements and principles of EDC/HRE can be clearly allocated to one level (e.g. co-operative learning to the micro-level and school documents to the meso-level). However, as EDC/HRE follows a whole-school approach some principles overlap and are part of two levels (e.g. conflict resolution which can be seen as a meso-level principle when used in the school as an organisation or on micro-level when



used individually by teachers for their class(es) as a cross-curricular principle). It is essential to note that a school can only carry out EDC/HRE successfully when practitioners are given the requisite encouragement and training.

2.1.1 Democracy and human rights education on a micro-level

Teaching democracy and human rights education encompasses various elements that are strongly linked to general principles of didactics or concrete teaching methods. These are:

- a) Differentiation
- b) Participation in one's own learning
- c) Co-operative learning
- d) Critical thinking
- e) Inclusive practices

a) Differentiation

Two-thirds of the respondents rated differentiated classrooms and individualization as a very important element of citizenship and human rights education. The remaining third estimates it as important. This is one of the top scores in comparison to other ratings. This importance is also reflected in the respondents' perceived reality of the schools. Around 90 % do see differentiation present in their schools, which means that practitioners take the students' individual differences into consideration in their daily teaching practice.

b) Participation in one's own learning

Participating in one's own learning is rated by over two thirds of the respondents as very important. However, only one third of these respondents experience it to a great extent, while half of them to some extent. A very small number of practitioners do not see this element in their schools at all. Participating in one's own learning can mean gaining insights through experiential learning, using peer-assessment, initiating co-research activities or providing opportunities for selecting subjects of interest by the students.

c) Co-operative learning

The same can be stated for co-operation and co-operative learning methods. They have successfully been integrated into European classrooms. Teachers and school leaders believe they are very important and important, and the majority also sees them applied in their school. Students are enabled to co-operate with each other and can benefit from other colleagues.

d) Critical thinking

Critical thinking, including problem solving activities, comes within the top-rated elements of EDC/HRE. Over two thirds see it as very important, the remaining third as important. The results are interesting here and not as consistent as those for differentiation: While the majority sees critical thinking being used in schools, a small number of practitioners only see it applied only to a small extent. However, it is important to differentiate between explicit and implicit ways of promoting critical thinking. The trends show that this seems to be an important issue, especially for new democracies.

e) Inclusive practices

Inclusive practices are regarded as very important and important by practitioners. The perceived reality in the schools matches this picture. Practitioners in European schools use inclusive practices such as welcoming new students, assisting them in becoming part of and ensuring that their



personal background is affirmed in the environment. This might also result from reacting to different situations in classes and schools that practitioners face in school systems that do not look back on a long history of segregation.

Recommendations

A very positive picture is presented in the perceived importance and extent to which democracy and human rights education principles are practised in European schools. Practitioners are highly aware and practice student-centred approaches in their daily teaching. The exchange of good practice models by colleagues could serve as a stimulus for bringing on board the small numbers of practitioners who have still to introduce activities on critical thinking, problem solving and participating in their own learning. Peer teaching and peer feedback as solid elements in schools or in in-service training settings provide a possible way for supporting this.

2.1.2 Democracy and human rights education on a meso-level

Implementing democracy and human rights education as a whole-school approach encompasses various elements that are strongly linked to the following general principles of participation and governance processes in an organisational context. These are:

- a) Integration of citizenship and/or human rights education in the school curriculum
- b) The role of extra-curricular or out-of-school activities
- c) Supporting students with disabilities or belonging to other vulnerable groups*
- d) Freedom of speech*
- e) Professional development
- f) School documents
- g) School rules
- h) Equal opportunities through rules
- i) Proactive approach for difficulties
- j) Conflict resolution*
- k) Use of mediators
- l) Participation in decision-making*
- m) Representation of students
- n) Expression of opinion and participation*
- o) Exchange of information

These elements can also be practised at the micro-level of individual teachers in their classroom. In a whole-school approach it is essential that they are also reflected in school-wide policies and practices as part of the school identity as well as a sign of commitment not only by individual teachers but also the school management.

a) Integration of citizenship and/or human rights education in school curriculum

There seem to be differences in the perception of importance and the reality in school practice. Citizenship and/or human rights education can be organized as a separate subject, integrated into different subjects or through a cross-curricular approach. The majority of practitioners see the integration of CE and HRE carried out to some extent in their school. Almost all participating practitioners believe that this integration is (very) important whereas only a little more than two thirds can say that this is true for their school curriculum to a great or to some extent. Almost a quarter of practitioners only see it happen to a small extent.



b) The role of extra-curricular or out-of-school activities

The results are reassuring with regard to the role of extra-curricular or out-of-school activities. This includes activities such as clubs, international days or school visits. These types of activities are organized in schools to a great or to some extent among the majority of participants who regard them as important.

c) Supporting students with disabilities or belonging to other vulnerable groups

The estimated importance and perceived reality in schools match each other meaning that practitioners consider this to be a very important issue as well as seeing this carried out in their schools, although with a slight decline. This includes the support for students with disabilities but also students with a refugee or migrant background or belonging to a religious or cultural minority. A small number of practitioners say that students with disabilities or belonging to other vulnerable groups are only supported to a small or to no extent. Further investigation would be needed to clarify this result and find out more about the underlying reasons for this.

d) Freedom of speech

Expression of one's opinions and views are regarded as very important by the majority of practitioners. The perceived situation in the schools differs a little, with half of them seeing an expression of views, including controversial views, as realized to a great extent and another 44% to some extent. A tenth of all responding practitioners only see this realized to a small extent. This result correlates with the results on "critical thinking" at the micro-level. A more thorough investigation into explicit activities or implicit practices could shed light onto concrete needs and implications in old and in new democracies.

e) Professional development

Professional development is regarded as very important by two thirds of the practitioners and by one third as important. This includes not only professional development of teachers but also of school management staff and the way it is encouraged. Almost all respondents also feel that this is the case to a great or some extent in their schools.

f) School documents

In the majority of the schools the school documents reflect the principles of democracy, equality and diversity to a great extent or some extent. The participants also regard this as very important or as important. The formal integration of citizenship or human rights education seems to be present in European schools.

g) School rules

A similar result can be stated for clear school principles and values that are known and shared by students, teachers, school management and parents. In the majority of the schools these principles and values are known and shared by all involved and they are also regarded as very important or important by them.

h) Equal opportunities through rules

School rules for ensuring equal access and treatment for all involved is considered highly important by practitioners. They also perceive that school rules function in their schools to a great extent or are at least present. These school rules ensure equal access and treatment for all students, teachers and other members of the school regardless of their race, ethnicity,



socioeconomic status, gender, language, sexual orientation, religion or ability. However,

practitioners do not rate these groups' participation in decision-making processes as highly as equal opportunities through rules.

i) Proactive approach for difficulties

A proactive approach for dealing with controversial and difficult issues is rated as very important by almost two thirds of the respondents and important by the remaining one third. The perceived extent in the schools shifts the numbers a little from a great extent to some extent. Only a few practitioners see proactive measures taken only to a small extent. Drawing a connection between proactive approaches for difficulties and "freedom of speech" and "critical thinking" could result in more information on how practitioners experience this in their schools.

j) Conflict resolution

Conflict resolution is listed as one of the top elements for citizenship and human rights education by all participants. Almost all participating practitioners rate this as very important or important. The importance is reflected also in the extent the participants perceive the practice in schools. Around 90% state that in their school procedures for peacefully resolving conflict and counteracting discrimination, hate speech and bullying are present to a great or some extent. A small percentage of practitioners feel that procedures for dealing with these issues are present only to a small extent.

k) Use of mediators

In comparison to other elements, the use of mediators and peer-to-peer techniques for management of difficult issues and negative interpersonal relationships (e.g. students-teachers-school management) was not given high importance by participants. The same is true for the perceived extent this is practiced in schools. Maybe this is due to a lack of information on this function or because this function does not exist in the member State's school systems.

l) Participation in decision-making

The participation of teachers, students and parents in school in decision-making processes is rated as very important by over two thirds and as important by almost one third of the respondents. In the schools itself the perceived practice is also rated by almost all practitioners as present to a great or some extent. A rather small group only perceives this practice as present to a small extent.

m) Representations of students

A similar picture is given when it comes to representation of students and active participation in running the school through specific bodies such as student councils. Practitioners believe this is very important or important and also perceive this to be the case in their schools. However, one fifth of the participating practitioners see representation of students organized in schools only to a small, or even to no, extent.

n) Expression of opinion and participation

Expression of opinion and the participation of students in matters that concern them in relation to school or also wider issues are rated as very important by almost 80% of the participants. The



majority found these were respected in their schools to a great extent or to some extent.

o) Relationships with stakeholders at school to be based on trust, respect and close collaboration

Relationships based on trust with different stakeholders is among the top elements considered important by teachers and school leaders. This is also reflected in their perception of how relationships based on trust are practiced in schools. Almost all respondents state that this happens in their school to a great or to some extent.

p) Exchange of information

A similar picture is given when it comes to the exchange of information in school and the question whether this exchange is done in a transparent way and the information is accessible to all. This is generally rated to be highly important or important by almost all respondents. The perception of practice in the schools shifts downwards slightly, but still almost 60% perceive this to a great extent and one third state this is practiced to some extent.

Recommendations

The perceived importance and extent to which democracy and human rights education principles are realised on a meso-level gives a mixed picture. Whereas democracy education and human rights education is well integrated in school documents, school rules, equal opportunities through rules, proactive approaches for conflict resolution, exchange of information or relationships based on trust with stakeholders there are some elements that do have a potential for development. Representation of students, supporting students with disabilities or belonging to other vulnerable groups, freedom of speech and the use of mediators have been solidly integrated into the democracy and human rights education curriculum. Again, good practice examples could serve as encouragement for schools still on their way to realising these mainly structural and process-oriented changes. We recommend giving stakeholders with good practice examples a platform where they can actively share their experiences, particularly in the area of participation of different stakeholders, representation of students and integration of students with disabilities or belonging to other vulnerable groups. In addition to the exchange of experiences among practitioners, extra information on the use of mediators might be helpful for member States whose school systems have not provided for this function so far. Democratic culture is therefore dependent not only on the structures but also cultural practice: even when the structures are present in schools, key democratic principles must be reflected in the culture and practice of how these structures are used. The CoE campaign shall focus on promoting this democratic culture.

2.1.3 Democracy and human rights education on a macro-level

Installing democracy and human rights education as a whole-school approach also means opening the school to external stakeholders for potential co-operation, joint activities or exchange and networking. The elements on a macro-level are:

- a) Integration of parents in decision-making
- b) School projects and community
- c) Co-operation with NGOs
- d) Co-operation with local authorities
- e) School network
- f) Local, national and international partnerships

- a) Integration of parents in decision-making processes and/or activities



The “integration of parents in decision-making” is part of the meso-level under point I) which

addresses the integration of different stakeholders within the school and the “learning triangle” between students, teachers and parents. In this context, the question focused on the role of parents in school decision-making processes. The results display a similar picture as the integration of students in governance processes. Almost all practitioners rate it as very important or as important, but when it comes to the perceived practice in schools the numbers shift slightly towards a lower distribution. Around 14% of practitioners see this practice only to a small extent.

b) School projects and community

Using school projects for solving community problems or to support community interests is perceived as very important and important by almost all participants. The extent to which the practice is perceived in schools is a little lower, but nonetheless around 82% perceive this practice to take place to a great or to some extent. Around 15% of the practitioners state that they experience this only to a small extent.

c) Co-operation with NGOs or other community organisations

Cooperation with NGOs or other community organisations for promoting education for human rights is perceived to take place by 29% of the respondents to a great extent in schools and to some extent by 45% of the respondents. Almost all participants consider this to be very important or important. More practitioners see this practice take place only to a small or some extent in their schools in comparison to other items.

d) Co-operation with local authorities

Cooperation with local authorities is considered very important and important by almost all respondents. Also, almost three quarters of the practitioners do see this happen to a great or to some extent in their school. However, there are still one fifth of the practitioners who only experience this to a small extent and 5% to no extent at all.

e) School network

A similar picture can be drawn for school networks and whether a school is a member of a local, regional or international network for sharing experiences and resources as for cooperating with local authorities. The majority regards school networks as (very) important and the perceived reality of the practice differs only a little. Seventeen per cent state this happens to only a small extent and a small number have no experience of this at all.

f) Local, national and international partnerships

As a third aspect of networking, the question on local, national and international partnerships with other schools to discuss social, cultural and global issues and to take action together delivers the same results. The majority regards this as (very) important whereas only around 26% experience it to a small or no extent in their schools.

Recommendations

The qualitative survey shows that the biggest area for development lies in opening the school to external stakeholders and working together with them for supporting democracy and human rights education. This includes almost all the elements listed above, even though practitioners feel that these elements are very important or important. In the elements such as working together with local authorities, setting up school networks, developing local, national or international partnerships, co-operating with NGOs or carrying out joint school projects within the community, around 20%, and sometimes even 25%, see this present to only



a small extent in their schools. Clearly, this is an area for development which could be tackled by the exchange of experiences with schools but also with more information on what happens in schools by themselves. School management staff needs to become more aware of the possibilities of opening up schools in this respect and using resources that are available out-of-school. National or international competitions which reward schools for successful networking projects could serve as an additional incentive. It is evident that school leaders and school management staff are key people in these processes.

2.2 Which key topics were addressed and which materials were used?

Part II of the survey asked for more detailed information on practices in schools. Materials and proof could be uploaded by the participants. The material shared demonstrated that there is a variety of good practices present in the schools that can be exchanged, used as role models and should be presented on a platform for exchange.

2.2.1 Key topics

The respondents rated Freedom of speech, Democratic Citizenship, Democracy, Diversity, Human Rights and Conflict Resolution as the top key topics they addressed while implementing their practice. The table below shows this distribution and, in view of the various materials and links, also suggests that there is expertise present in the schools and best practice models which could be used for peer-to-peer learning.

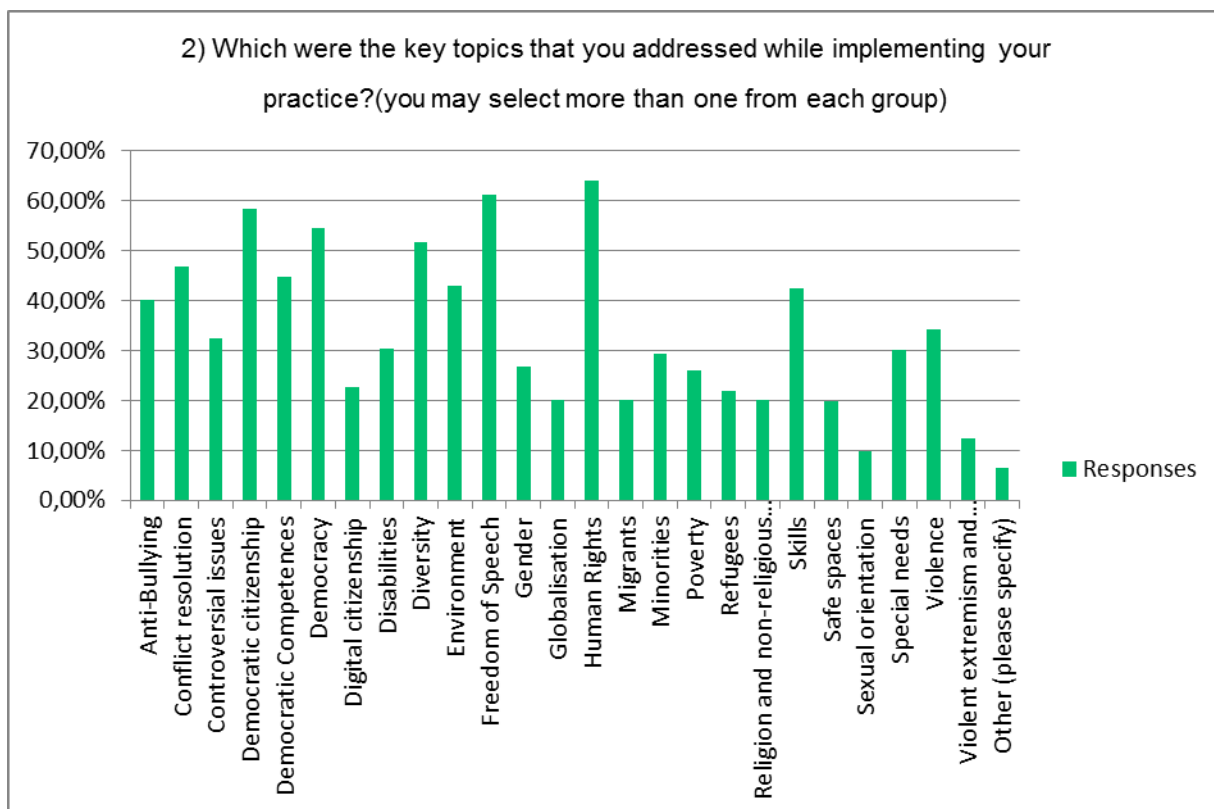


Diagram 2: Addressed key topics

2.2.2 Use of Council of Europe materials and future demand

The following CoE materials used in the schools by the participants ranked among the top places: All different – all equal, Competences for democratic culture, Democratic governance of schools, Human



Rights and Democracy Start with us – Charter for all and Living Democracy Manuals for Teachers. Replies to the question on additional interest and a future request for getting to know more about the produced CoE materials on CE and HRE draw a similar picture, with the Living Democracy Manuals for Teachers ranked top, followed by Competences for Democratic Culture and Democratic Governance of Schools, All different – all equal as well as multimedia materials.