REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE (RFCDC)

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Guidance document for vocational education and training

Council of Europe

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Cover design and layout: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

Cover photo: © Shutterstock

ISBN 978-92-871-9509-8

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Abbreviations

AEVO	*Ausbildereignungsverordnung* (legal document covering the qualification of in-company trainers in Germany)
CDC	Competences for democratic culture
CDEDU	Steering Committee for Education
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CPD	Continuing professional development
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
DFJW	*Deutsch-Französische Jugendwerk*
ESD	Education for sustainable development
EU	European Union
HR	Human resources
ITT	Initial teacher training
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
JAV	*Jugend- und Auszubildendenvertretung* (work councils for apprentices and young workers in German enterprises)
LAC	Leadership/apprentice community
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFAJ	*Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse*
RFCDC	Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture
VET	Vocational education and training

Preface

The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) was developed by the Council of Europe Education Department in co-operation with international experts. Since its publication in 2018, several guidance documents have been produced to help member states and education professionals to implement the RFCDC in their education systems.

Several evaluations of the implementation of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and the RFCDC recommended that further attention needs to be paid to the relation between the RFCDC and vocational education and training (VET).

During the 26th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, which was held on 28 and 29 September 2023 in Strasbourg, three resolutions were adopted on the renewal of education's civic mission, on education in times of emergency and crisis, and the harnessing of the potential of digital transformation in education. In the resolution on the renewal of the civic mission of education, the Committee of Ministers instructed the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) to broaden the use of the RFCDC to all levels of education, including VET.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe Education Strategy for 2024-2030 sets specific objectives, one of which is to pay special attention to VET in promoting quality citizenship education through the RFCDC and the acquisition and practice of competences that foster democratic culture and intercultural understanding.

In 2022, the Education Department initiated the project to develop this guidance document with the creation of an Expert Group on the RFCDC and VET, including experts from member states and observers to the CDEDU. The group was composed of experts from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Malta, Norway, Romania, Spain, the Federation for European Education (FEDE), the Holy See, and the Lifelong Learning Platform.

This publication, expertly drafted by Dr Andrea Laczik of the Edge Foundation and Dr Søren Kristensen, responds to this need in providing the necessary guidance to implement the RFCDC in VET. This guidance document on the RFCDC and VET benefits greatly from two thematic events organised in Strasbourg on 15 May and 5 September 2023, where a large number of VET stakeholders provided valuable insights and examples of practices that were essential to the writing of this publication.

Finally, the Education Department is particularly grateful to the efforts made by Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland in providing examples of practice on how the RFCDC and CDC can be applied and integrated into VET.

Chapter 1

Introduction

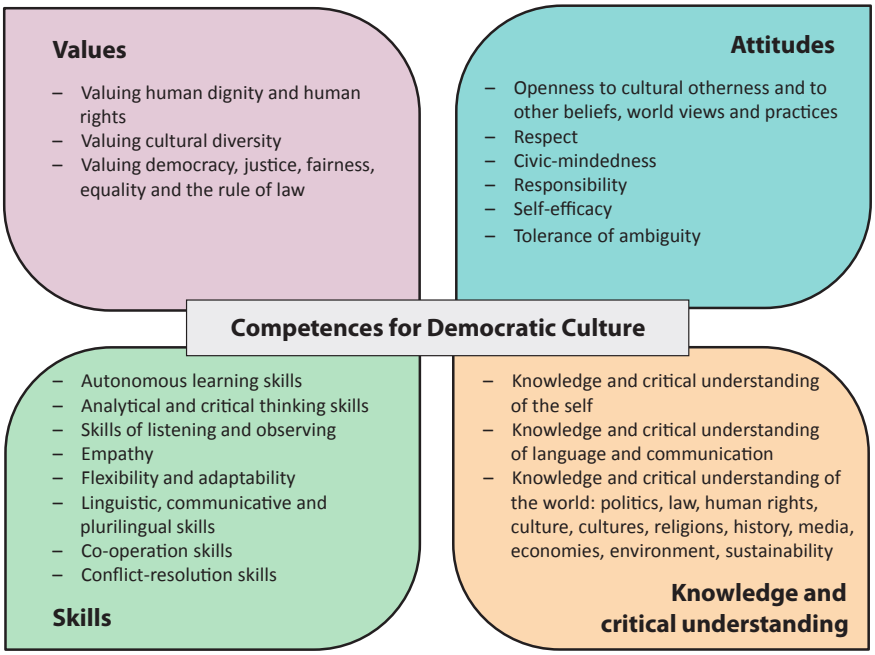
Vocational education and training (VET) is crucial to the economic development and growth of modern nations because it develops the skilled workforce that is needed to maintain the efficiency and competitiveness of public and private enterprises. However, VET – and especially initial VET (IVET) – is not exclusively about developing skills for the labour market and economy. It is an integral part of the entire educational system and shares its broader aim of preparing learners not only for employment, but also for life as active citizens in democratic societies. IVET nurtures the personal development of learners and provides them with a broader knowledge base. This is all the more important because IVET learners are often young and in a formative phase in which they are developing the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required to function as citizens in modern, democratic workplaces and societies.

Young people may enter IVET as early as 15-16 years of age and IVET accounts for a large proportion of the total cohort of young people, even though participation in IVET varies greatly among countries (between 15% and 70%). In the European Union (EU), on average 50% of all young people between the ages of 15 and 19 are engaged in IVET (European Education Area),[1] while in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, 31% of all young people are engaged in IVET at the age of 17 (OECD 2022). For these reasons, a few national governments across Europe have taken care to embed learning outcomes related to the competences for democratic culture (CDC) in VET curricula as part of their overall socialisation strategies for learners within the educational systems. However, VET is unlike other sectors of the educational system (formal or even non-formal) and contains a number of specificities – one of which is a very high degree of diversity between systems in Europe. This must be taken into account when discussing the implementation of CDC in a VET context.

The Council of Europe developed the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture which includes the model of competences for democratic culture (Figure 1), which was adopted by the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in April 2016. In this model, there are 20 competences grouped into four categories: Values, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge and critical understanding.

1. Available at https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/vocational-education-and-training/about-vocational-education-and-training, accessed 28 June 2024.

Figure 1. The model of competences for democratic culture



Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

These 20 competences are necessary for individuals to act as active citizens, and "to take action to defend and promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, and to live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies".[2] This guidance document for VET builds on the RFCDC documents and should ideally be read in conjunction with these.

VET is above all characterised by its direct link to the labour market. VET learners completing their programme are qualified for employment in a specific industry sector or occupation. Hence, curricula for VET programmes are based on labour market information about the skills requirements of trade and industry, and often come directly from employers, employers' associations and in many countries also from trade unions. Consequently, they often contain a very high proportion of vocational elements pertaining to the specific labour market function they target, leaving – in many cases – only limited space for elements of general education. Opportunities for learners for direct participation in decision making concerning issues related to curricula are often similarly circumscribed. However, as in all educational sectors, including VET, the participation of learners in all pertinent areas of decision making remains a key principle in the endeavours to educate active citizens who engage and take responsibility both in democratic processes in society and in the workplace.

Considerable differences exist among Council of Europe member states concerning the apportionment of vocational and general elements in VET curricula. This often relates to the broader aims of VET in individual countries; in many countries, initial

2. Available at www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/home, accessed 28 June 2024.

VET programmes are longer (two to five years) and elements of general education are integral to these. In others, programmes are much shorter and more targeted at specific vocational functions or profiles. However, even if VET programmes are shorter and more occupation-specific, this does not justify treating the development of democratic competences cursorily or even skipping them altogether.

Furthermore, learning in VET may take place in multiple environments: in VET schools, training centres and in workplaces. In the case of apprenticeships, up to 80% of the duration of the programme may be spent in the enterprise while the remaining 20% is spent in a vocational school (dual systems). These multiple learning venues make VET fundamentally different from general education and higher education, where learning is almost exclusively situated in dedicated institutions, such as schools, colleges and universities.

However, dual systems require dual efforts. The role of enterprises as learning platforms must also be considered and integrated as part of the process to develop CDC. If CDC is integrated in a school subject only, and learners experience another reality when they are in the enterprises on work placement or as apprentices, it may seriously undermine (or even annul) the CDC learning process. Even though enterprises are designed for profit in the first place and not as democratic structures, the importance of ongoing and constructive dialogue between management and staff is generally perceived as beneficial in the effort to ensure harmonious relations and avoid unrest that may result in disruptions in production and hence a loss of profit. This social dialogue can directly relate to the development of CDC. Many enterprises have corporate social responsibility (CSR)[3] strategies and actively pursue inclusive and diversifying recruitment processes in order to broaden their recruitment base at times of skills shortages. CSR-related activities similarly have relevance to CDC. The development of CDC in VET therefore requires a joint effort by all actors, practitioners, stakeholders and policy makers[4] and has to be part of a co-ordinated effort regardless of where it is delivered.

This publication exclusively focuses on IVET at secondary level and does not, in principle, cover the tertiary level (higher vocational education). It is written for the pan-European context, which comprises a broad variety of systems which in turn require different approaches and prioritisations, and where constellations and roles of actors and stakeholders may not be identical. Rather than providing prescriptive guidelines for developing CDC, it conveys many of its messages through practical examples that have been culled from a variety of VET contexts across Council of Europe member states. It is therefore primarily intended as a source of inspiration, and not as a manual for immediate, practical use in a specific system configuration or for a particular target group.

3. Corporate social responsibility is defined by the European Commission as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society". This includes how a company's activities affect – among other things – human rights, workers, the rule of law, the community and the environment.
4. The term "actors" is used here to denote those engaged in VET delivery (practitioners), whereas "stakeholders" denotes those who are involved in the design and development of VET systems and curricula.

The guidance document has three main parts:

- an introduction which provides a framework of understanding for the development of CDC in VET in a European context;
- sections on the implementation of CDC in various configurations of VET in Europe; and
- a concluding section which focuses on the advantages of a strategic, concerted approach, at both national and institutional levels, in order to maximise the impact of efforts.

Target groups

The primary target group for this guidance document is policy makers and stakeholders at regional, national and European level who are responsible for education and training policies and curriculum development in the field of VET. This comprises not only ministries of education and other public authorities at national and regional level, but also social partner organisations, employers' associations and trade unions that are involved in the development of VET, irrespective of whether this happens indirectly in an advisory or directly in an executive role.

A secondary target group is actors and practitioners. At the level of vocational schools or training centres, practitioners comprise both teachers and directors and other management staff. The rationale for this lies in the key observation that the development of democratic competences of VET learners happens both as a subject, for example learning about democracy as in citizenship education, and as an approach, such as participating in democratic processes in the school and/or at the workplace. Teachers are responsible for delivering the content of the curriculum and – in many cases – for adopting participative methods for teaching and learning, such as co-operative learning. This approach to teaching and learning may stimulate learners' involvement in democratic dialogues and decision making in the school, the enterprise, or in society as a whole. Directors and other management staff are responsible for involving learners in institutional democratic processes, for example in the shape of student councils.

As an important part of learning in VET takes place in the workplace, in particular in alternance-based VET systems, enterprises (management, human resources (HR) staff and in-company trainers) are responsible for the training of learners on placements and on apprenticeship programmes. These actors are also a key target group for this publication. Even though enterprises are first and foremost geared towards production and, as such, they are in principle not democratic institutions, CDC is relevant here too. It is in the interests of both employers and employees that relations are determined in a dialogue where issues can be settled peacefully and without disruptive conflicts. In many countries, platforms for this dialogue already exist, for example in the shape of work councils, but using them constructively is also a matter of training which ideally should be undertaken from the moment the learner sets foot in the enterprise.

Definitions of key terms

There is often reference to "narrow" and "broad" definitions in the context of CDC in educational activities. The narrow definition refers to the transmission of knowledge concerning a country's constitutional structure and political institutions and the conditions for participating in these. The broad definition goes much further and covers the development of underlying competences required for active participation in societal life including working life, such as social responsibility, skills for establishing effective interpersonal relations with people from different backgrounds, and successful personal development.

In this document, the key terms – "democratic culture" and "competence" – are used in alignment with the overall use of the terms in the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC). Here, these are defined as follows:[5]

> Democracy is more than the sum of its institutions. A healthy democracy depends in large part on the development of a democratic civic culture. The term "democratic culture" emphasises the fact that, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, such institutions and laws cannot work in practice unless they are grounded in a culture of democracy, that is, in democratic values, attitudes and practices shared by citizens and institutions. Among other things, these include a commitment to the rule of law and human rights, a commitment to the public sphere, a conviction that conflicts must be resolved peacefully, acknowledgement of and respect for diversity, a willingness to express one's own opinions, a willingness to listen to the opinions of others, a commitment to decisions being made by majorities, a commitment to the protection of minorities and their rights, and a willingness to engage in dialogue across cultural divides. It also includes concern for the sustainable well-being of fellow human beings, as well as for the environment in which we live.
>
> Competence is the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context. This implies selecting, activating, co-ordinating and organising the relevant set of values, attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills and applying these through behaviour which is appropriate to those situations. In addition to this global and holistic use of the term "competence", the term "competences" (in the plural) is used in the Framework to refer to the specific individual resources (namely, the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding) that are mobilised and deployed in the production of competent behaviour.

In national contexts, dedicated courses on CDC appear in curricular contexts under different subjects or areas of education, such as citizenship education, civic education, social studies, etc. Even though they may cover significant differences,

5. Glossary: Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (coe.int), accessed March 2023.

the term "citizenship education" has been consistently used in this document as a common denominator, unless otherwise stated.

For the term "vocational education and training", the definition provided by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)[6] is used:

> Vocational education and training, abbreviated as VET, sometimes simply called vocational training, is the training in skills and teaching of knowledge related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation in which the student or employee wishes to participate. Vocational education may be undertaken at an educational institution, as part of secondary or tertiary education, or may be part of initial training during employment, for example as an apprentice, or as a combination of formal education and workplace learning.

VET is generally broken down into two constituent components: IVET (initial vocational education and training), which covers programmes providing a recognised qualification that gives direct entry into the labour market, and CVET (continuing vocational education and training), which as a rule builds on an IVET qualification and provides an update of existing competences. There is also the phenomenon of micro-credentials,[7] which signifies short courses or programmes, often with a very specific vocational objective, which are offered to people without the requirement of formal qualifications in a given field.

Whereas IVET programmes primarily (but not exclusively) target young people and may last from two to four years, CVET and micro-credentials generally target adult learners and are of a very limited duration, which can be counted in days or even hours. Both forms of VET are in principle included, but the main emphasis is on IVET, as the short duration of CVET and micro-credentials usually implies a focus on skills of a purely vocational nature.

Research on CDC in VET

CDC in VET is a vastly underresearched area in most, if not all, European countries. This is even more pronounced at European level, even though Eurydice (the EU's information network on educational systems and policies in Europe) publishes an overview of national policies of citizenship education in 38 European countries approximately every five years. In this overview, school-based IVET is included along with general education (International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 1, 2 and 3). Moreover, the research studies that exist are very different in focus, and it would be an exaggeration to speak of research communities targeting CDC in VET at a national, let alone pan-European level. Therefore, existing research seldom takes into account findings from other national contexts which might have enriched

6. Glossary: Vocational education and training (VET) – Statistics Explained (europa.eu), online tool, accessed April 2023.
7. European Education Area, A European approach to micro-credentials, available at https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/micro-credentials, accessed 28 June 2024.

scope and perspective. Some general trends can be discerned in the research that has been identified,[8] however:

- In several countries, research has demonstrated a significantly lower level of participation in democratic processes (e.g. elections at school level and engagement in student councils) among IVET learners compared to their peers in upper secondary general education.
- CDC are integrated in, for example, citizenship education, civic education and social studies in IVET in all countries, but often as a stand-alone module of limited duration, and usually placed at the beginning of the learning trajectory. There are only a few examples of CDC as a strategy that is fully integrated into the entire duration of a VET programme, for example as a theme in other subjects or the active promotion of learner participation in school governance. Developments often occur at the initiative of dedicated and engaged individual teachers and are not integrated as system features.
- There is research that points to the existence of factors which can hinder the development of CDC in (I)VET learning processes, where learners are indirectly (for example through the way in which they are addressed) turned in the direction of conformity with existing norms and structures, rather than being guided towards independent, critical thinking.
- Even though apprenticeship is the dominant form of IVET in many European countries where learners spend up to 80% of their trajectory in enterprises, there are no studies dedicated to the role of CDC there and how this issue is (or could be) integrated into in-company training.

The above conclusions, however, are based on a very low number of studies coming from very diverse systemic and cultural backgrounds, hence are indicative rather than conclusive.

Specificities of VET in a European comparative perspective

VET – and in particular IVET – in Europe is above all characterised by a high degree of diversity when held up against general and higher education, where systems are more comparable across borders. In VET, we are confronted with a plurality not only of systems and structures, but also of learner profiles, stakeholder involvement, educational practices, teacher and trainer qualifications, duration, mode of provision and social status. Diversity of VET exists at several levels: at European level where countries present different VET systems and a combination of systems, and at national level, where different VET systems may exist side by side. All of this may impinge on efforts to develop CDC in VET learners.

In relation to the implementation of the RFCDC, the main issue undoubtedly resides in the fact that VET can be delivered at different learning venues. A distinction can be made between school-based VET and work-based VET, depending on

8. Research that has contributed to – or inspired – this guidance document is listed in the references at the end. The research has been identified through research databases or by the members of the Expert Group.

where the main learning venue is located. In the former, the main learning venue is the VET school, which offers both theoretical and practical training, as a rule interspersed with short placement periods in enterprises or in the VET school's workshop. In the latter, training is overwhelmingly delivered in enterprises, where it is set in a practical context and where learners are actively involved in production processes as apprentices. This training is then supplemented by periods in VET schools where learners acquire theoretical elements of their programme. In Europe, there are countries where school-based VET is the norm (e.g. in Sweden), in other countries work-based learning is the predominant mode of delivery (e.g. in Germany). Yet in a number of countries, both models exist side by side (e.g. in France). It is the exception, however, that VET (at least in the shape of IVET) is delivered entirely as a school-based or enterprise-based activity.

To compound complexity, it may be argued that a third form of IVET exists, namely credit-based learning, where learners can combine many different learning venues (not exclusively VET schools and enterprises) and accumulate experience which can be recognised up-front or through an ex-post accreditation process (accreditation of prior learning (APL)) and ultimately be recognised as (parts of) a formal VET qualification. This means that VET may be delivered more flexibly in terms of time and space, but also that there are fewer possibilities to control learning venues and processes, in particular for the development of more complex skills and attitudes that require a consistent effort over a protracted period of time.

IVET programmes normally position themselves on levels 3-4[9] on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) which means that the completion of a programme generally lasts from two to five years. However, there are differences between countries and individual programmes. Moreover, the introduction of lifelong learning strategies and possibilities for accreditation of prior learning means that the time spent as a learner – and hence the time when it is possible for teachers and trainers to influence learning processes – may vary considerably from country to country.

Due to the close proximity of VET with the world of work and the need to constantly keep up with rapidly changing developments in industry, VET curricula are generally developed in close co-operation with employers and their associations, and often with trade unions as well in apprenticeship-based systems. However, the level of employers' involvement differs. In some countries, they merely have a consultative role in relation to ministries of education, whereas in others the social partners exert a direct influence on the contents and modes of delivery of VET to the extent that it can be argued that they are key decision makers for the VET system, for example in Denmark. Even though their focus is often on more technical learning outcomes that are of direct relevance to their business, they are important stakeholders that need to be involved and considered when discussing the development of CDC in curricula contexts. The so-called social dialogue at the workplace can be an important forum for both the development and exercise of CDC.

VET encompasses learners of all ages and with very different backgrounds. In many countries, the overwhelming majority who engage with VET are young

9. Some programmes may also include elements from levels 2 and 5.

and may commence a VET programme from the age of 15-16 (e.g. in Germany and Hungary). In other countries, the average age of learners is well over 20, and overall, there has been a general trend of increasing adult participation in VET since 1995 (CEDEFOP 2019).

There is no evidence of this diversity in European VET systems disappearing. The reforms and adjustments that are constantly ongoing to develop VET to meet the requirements of rapid changes in areas of technology and the work organisation of modern society do not seem to lead to a harmonisation – on the contrary, it may be argued that complexities increase rather than wane. However, in many European countries VET is often perceived by young people (and their parents) as a learning pathway of lower prestige when compared with upper secondary general education. It is often considered suitable for low achievers, early school leavers or dropouts from general education. There is a considerable body of literature about offering "second chance" VET programmes (e.g. in Spain) to those who have failed in general upper secondary education or who never managed to move on from compulsory schooling. However, there are also young people who consciously choose the vocational path based on an informed decision and with clear career objectives. WorldSkills[10] competitors exemplify high achievers who have chosen to take the vocational route and they can serve as role models for their peers.

The low status of VET means that many countries witness a dwindling number of young people opting for VET, and hence face an alarming shortage of people with VET qualifications in industry and commerce as older generations retire. In addition, significant parts of the working population of Europe do not have qualifications above lower secondary education or possess VET qualifications which have become obsolete due to rapidly accelerating changes in technology or global trade patterns. For these reasons, VET strategies in Europe are now firmly inscribed in a context of lifelong learning policies, where the focus is on flexible learning pathways that can attract new types of learners ("new" in terms of age, background, gender, etc.). In many countries, a substantial percentage of people enrolled in VET programmes is thus adult learners.

These developments also have implications for CDC content and delivery in VET programmes. For instance, it has been argued[11] that involving VET learners in a more active role in decision making will enhance the attractiveness of VET and encourage recruitment among talented young people who might otherwise have opted for other pathways in the educational system.

10. Available at https://worldskills.org/, accessed 28 June 2024.
11. For example, by learner representatives at the second thematic seminar on CDC in VET, held in Strasbourg (5-6 September 2023).

Chapter 2

Developing and practising competences for democratic culture in VET

As it appears from the preceding section, an approach of "one-size-fits-all" in a discussion on developing CDC in a VET context is unlikely to be productive. In a comparative European perspective, it is necessary to make allowances for the diversity, both between VET systems and within them, and to be attentive to issues of transferability when we offer concrete examples of initiatives. What works in one context may not necessarily be effective elsewhere.

This chapter, which deals with the concrete implementation of a CDC dimension in VET contexts, should therefore not be seen as prescriptive. Its main purpose is inspirational, and articulated as practical examples, the relevance and usefulness of which readers are invited to assess considering their own context.

CDC in VET curricula

Curricula are systematic plans of what a learner must know, understand and be able to do upon completion of an educational trajectory. This is often expressed in terms of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding. Curricula may be developed at system level for full programmes, but they are also developed for individual components: modules, subjects, courses and even for learning venues. There are curricula that focus on cross-cutting issues and span sectors or the entire educational system, including VET. For CVET and micro-credentials, instances of CDC elements in curricula are less common, as this mostly concerns older learners who can be presumed to have gone through IVET. Moreover, CVET courses are generally much shorter, and as a rule have a much more pronounced focus on vocational and technical competences.

Today, most curricula are written as a learning outcomes-based approach, which puts learners at the centre and focuses on the process of learning rather than specific contents or institutional requirements. This means that, as a rule, they do not prescribe specific methods of teaching, textbooks or duration of the learning process, but focus on what learners must know, understand and be able to do upon completion of a learning trajectory, irrespective of methods used or time spent. This

gives VET teachers and trainers freedom to choose how they deliver the content, that is, how their learners achieve the learning outcomes taking their institutional or even personal and professional priorities into account. The degree of detail – also known as the granularity – of curricula differs, but usually there is a margin that allows some degree of adaptation to specific local or regional conditions. Moreover, curricula are not static but dynamic, and are regularly audited and changed in accordance with developments in skills profiles for occupations.

The elaboration of a curriculum is a complex affair. First of all, because it requires negotiations between stakeholders who often represent different perspectives and have different priorities. These priorities need to be carefully examined and deliberated in relation to the time and resources available, and ultimately decisions must be taken as to what can be included and what should be left out. It is not an option just to include everything, as this may lead to a curriculum overload. Finally, extreme care must be taken with terminology and formulations of the curriculum elements, so that the meanings are clear to all and misunderstandings are avoided.

The development and auditing of curricula in VET requires an intimate knowledge of technological and organisational developments in the world of work. For this reason, the task is generally done in close collaboration with stakeholders from the labour market. They may have a consultative role or a more active role with a direct influence on the content. The latter especially happens in countries with an apprenticeship system and where there is a high degree of organisation among both employers and workers. Often, the social partners – employers' organisations and trade unions – will focus on vocational aspects, whereas the relevant ministry (which is generally the ministry of education, but in some countries the ministry of labour) will focus on aspects of general education, such as CDC.

For CDC, the problem is often the level of granularity – how to get from general declarations to detailed, hands-on directions for practitioners in the classroom. The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture[12] can provide valuable inspirational material with its 20 competences and 447 descriptors, from which 135 key descriptors were identified and classified in three levels of proficiency: basic, intermediate and advanced.

CDC can be integrated into curricula in different ways:

- as a dedicated subject or course (civic education, citizenship education, social studies, etc.);
- as an element of one or more subjects or courses (e.g. in foreign language classes with a dimension of intercultural understanding);
- or as a cross-cutting theme that is implemented in all learning activities.

Dedicated courses or subjects are known under a variety of names, but it is common to all that they are often of short duration, and the extent to which developments in values and attitudes can be achieved exclusively through these is often rather limited. Rather, they furnish important background knowledge to underpin

12. See the full list at www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/rfcdc, accessed December 2023.

further activities that allow learners to develop enduring competences and attitudes fostering a democratic culture.

It is therefore not a matter of either/or, as these different modes of implementation can co-exist within a given programme. It is also clear that the larger the number of actors (teachers and trainers) involved, the more demanding is the task of co-ordination. However, there is no doubt that learners' outcomes could multiply massively if CDC is not only conveyed as a short course at the beginning of a programme but instilled as an integrated element during the entire length of their programme. Also, this makes it possible to work with CDC in progressive stages, where individual competences are revisited and further developed, and new ones added. This can be difficult to manage in credit-based learning systems, where learning takes place over a longer period of time and in venues which often have no formal connection and co-ordination.

Example from Albania

There are several separate subjects in VET curricula in Albania that address CDC issues. The main subject which provides CDC is citizenship education, normally taught in the first year (grade 10) of VET. This subject is included in all VET programmes and comprises 70 lessons. Other subjects that provide room for integrating CDC in school are notably history (a compulsory subject in all VET programmes) as well as life skills and career education.

Citizenship education in VET aims at helping learners "to build and develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed in a democratic society, to develop their potential in all dimensions (intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional, ethical and social)". Key elements in citizenship education are the rule of law, the Constitution of Albania, and human rights, and it aims at enabling learners to:

- develop knowledge and intellectual skills, which are indispensable to understand, to analyse and to influence policies;
- develop participatory skills and promote a conscious, responsible and qualified involvement in processes of solving community problems;
- develop their commitment to respecting values and principles of democratic co-existence.

CDC is also directly promoted in the learning objectives in the history curriculum of VET programmes, which requires learners to develop competences with regard to:

- understanding and interpreting the past in order to be able to understand its relationship with the present and the future;
- fostering fundamental values of citizenship, tolerance, human rights and democracy;
- sharpening their intellectual skills in order to be able to analyse and interpret historical information in a critical and responsible way;
- becoming active citizens at local, national and global level;
- interacting constructively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

An important issue when designing CDC elements of curricula for VET programmes is contextualisation, namely the interpretation of CDC according to the specific context or situation of learners, so that the relevance is clear. There are issues which are particular to VET, and which consequently are particularly relevant in VET curricula. For example, this can be the corporate social responsibility strategies of enterprises, which often include themes related to CDC, or also the social dialogue, which is of direct relevance in a CDC context.

"Social dialogue" in general is the process whereby social partners (trade unions and employer organisations) exchange information and negotiate on work-related issues. This can happen at the level of the individual workplace, but also at regional, sectoral and national level (often in collaboration with the government) or even multi-nationally. Social dialogue may assume several forms according to reigning traditions and legislation:

- **Information sharing**: the most basic form. In itself, it implies no real discussion or action on issues, but it is nevertheless essential in order to achieve an understanding of the positions of each social actor.
- **Consultation**: this is beyond a mere sharing of information. It requires engagement through a formalised process of exchange of views, which can, in turn, lead to more in-depth dialogue.
- **Collective bargaining**: direct negotiations between employers and a trade union or a group of employees aimed at reaching agreements to regulate working salaries, working conditions, benefits, etc.

Social dialogue itself is a means to promote consensus building and to avoid disruptive conflicts, and as such it inscribes itself in a wider democratic process. As noted by the International Labour Organization (ILO): "Successful social dialogue structures and processes have the potential to resolve important economic and social issues, encourage good governance, advance social and industrial peace and stability, and boost economic progress".[13] Social dialogue is also promoted by the European Commission as an instrument for better governance and promotion of social and economic reforms.[14]

Therefore, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding required for social dialogue often constitute crucial aspects of CDC development in a VET context.

Example from Denmark

In Denmark, social studies are incorporated into VET curricula as a separate, so-called basic subject, which is obligatory for all VET programmes and delivered at the beginning of these. It lasts for a total of 1.5 weeks and is described as follows:

"The subject gives learners insights into conditions on the labour market with the aim of enabling them to navigate as an employee in a context of industrial relations and labour market legislation. On a concrete basis, the subject provides knowledge and understanding of dynamics and complexities of modern society

13. Social dialogue, Digital toolkit for quality apprenticeships (ilo.org), accessed April 2024.
14. Social dialogue, Fact Sheets on the European Union (europa.eu), accessed March 2023.

by connecting current societal developments to sociological, economic and political contexts and thus qualifies learners' own position and options for action."

"Knowledge and insights into conditions on the labour market" is fleshed out in a number of learning objectives, among which we find:

- organisations on the labour market, including confederations, the structure of trade unions and employers' associations;
- the role of contractual bargaining and basic conflicts of interest between trade unions and employers;
- an awareness of own role and spheres of influence at the workplace, based on a knowledge of enterprises and organisations and how industrial relations are regulated;
- labour market conditions in the light of influence from international markets;
- free movement of labour and outsourcing;
- psychological work environment, including rights and duties in cases of sexual harassment on the labour market.

Personal development, critical thinking and intercultural understanding are also integrated into other obligatory, basic subjects: psychology, Danish and foreign languages.[15]

Example from Armenia

From November 2022 the Armenian Solidarity Centre, a US-based international worker rights organisation, together with six trainers from the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia launched a new project called Labour Rights Protection at the First Workplace, involving 14 VET colleges in the capital of Yerevan and the surrounding regions. The rationale for the project was the observation by the trade unions that young people from VET schools are entering into apprenticeships earlier than before, and that their rights are often being violated in the enterprises due to a lack of life experience. The goal of the project was to empower them by raising their awareness about their labour rights and how to exercise these rights. Training sessions have been conducted with participative methods, in which a total of 379 students took part during the school year. They learned about labour rights, violations and protection of labour rights, as well as the role of trade unions. After each seminar, learners were encouraged to discuss examples concerning labour rights in their workplaces with the trainers. A platform has been created on social media, where learners were encouraged to further expand and continue the discussion.

More input on the issue of CDC in curricula can be obtained from the RFCDC Volume 3[16] chapter on "CDC and curriculum".

15. Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet BEK nr. 555 af 27/4/2022. See Bekendtgørelse om grundfag, erhvervsfag, erhvervsrettet andetsprogsdansk og kombinationsfag i erhvervsuddannelserne og om adgangskurser til erhvervsuddannelserne (retsinformation.dk), accessed December 2023.
16. Available at https://rm.coe.int/prems-008518-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-3-8575-co/16807bc66e, accessed 28 June 2024.

Other platforms and practices for acquiring and fine-tuning CDC

Activities that are inscribed in curricula are generally obligatory for all learners within a given programme, even though some elements may be optional. However, learning objectives related to CDC can also be acquired and fine-tuned through other practices. Both in a school context and at the workplace, VET learners may engage in activities where they exercise their democratic rights as learners within institutions and authorities and thereby develop their democratic competences.

Since such activities are not defined in VET curricula, it is to a large extent up to the individual or the learning venue to decide on participation and level of engagement. Even though they may be anchored in relevant legislation as rights of the learner (e.g. to form student or work councils to influence relevant aspects of management), it is up to individual learners to participate in councils' elections and present themselves as candidates. Similarly, VET providers (schools or enterprises) can decide on the degree to which they encourage and support such activities. The learning venues play a considerable role in both the selection and accessibility of extracurricular CDC activities. School-based VET, where learners are together for most of the programme duration in a dedicated, pedagogical environment, is often more suited to facilitating activities than alternance-based systems, where learners are isolated and engaged in production processes during their time in the enterprise.

In the following list, some of the main forms of learning CDC are enumerated, but given the broad definition of CDC and the many permutations of VET it is not exhaustive. We draw on practical examples from various systemic and geographical contexts, both to promote understanding and furnish inspiration. These examples are subsumed under the learning environment – school or enterprise – where they are enacted. However, it is essential to underline that the development of CDC must be seen in a holistic and not a fragmented perspective. Learning in both venues should come together to equip citizens with competences to act in a constructive and positive interplay and dialogue with their surroundings, both in civic and working life. These practices are concerned with:

- inclusive pedagogical methods that promote learners' active participation in meaning-making processes (constructivist learning);
- events and activities that promote debates and knowledge dissemination on CDC-related issues;
- initiatives that facilitate encounters with people of other backgrounds and ethnicities to promote the exchange of viewpoints, reflection and critical thinking;
- an involvement in dialogues and democratic processes related to school governance (through participation in student councils) and workplace relations (through participation in work councils and other dialogue forums with management).

CDC-conducive practices in a school context

Even within the context of the VET school, the diversity of European VET systems creates different conditions for activities that promote the acquisition and

development of CDC. Generally, however, this can happen through three types of actions:

- participation in school governance (student councils);
- teaching and learning methods;
- single-standing educational activities or projects.

School governance

Student councils are integrated as a feature of most VET systems, but the role and possibilities for influence may vary. At one end, the council merely gives a voice to learners in relation to school management, whereas in others, student councils may also be able to influence decisions in more formal ways. In some countries (e.g. Denmark), VET schools are private institutions with a board of directors, where student councils are represented, sometimes even with voting rights.

But even though VET learners have the right to organise and set up student councils, this is not always happening. It may be due to practical barriers, in particular in apprenticeship systems, where apprentices seldom gather in the VET school and where they may feel closer to their enterprise than the VET school. The structure of the programme delivery may also play a role in whether apprenticeship is organised as block release, where learners attend school in coherent blocks of time, which may last several months at any one time, or as day release, where learners attend school once a week and spend the remaining four days in their enterprise. Further, it is at times a problem to ensure attendance for elected representatives during placement periods at student council meetings or meetings with school management and/or board of directors if the enterprise is not willing to release the apprentice for the meeting day, and if this is not inscribed as a right in collective agreements or legislation.

Another reason for a failure to operate student councils is if these are perceived by learners as nominal and having no real influence, and that consequently participation is considered a waste of their time. This may happen in school contexts where student councils are mainly forums for dialogue and where all decisions ultimately are taken by management or other stakeholders distant from the students. There are also student councils where representatives on boards have voting rights, but where influence is otherwise circumscribed or where voting systems do not permit any real influence. This breeds demotivation and indifference.

Example from Denmark

The formation of student councils is a right in Danish VET schools which is embedded in legislation in the shape of a dedicated ministerial order.[17] They are not obligatory, but strongly encouraged, and in schools where these do not exist, management is obliged to inform learners of their rights in this respect and to provide support in establishing them. The ministerial order also prescribes that

17. Børne- og undervisningsministeriet BEK nr. 2367 af 10/12/2021. See Bekendtgørelse om elevråd ved institutioner for almengymnasial uddannelse, almen voksenuddannelse, erhvervsrettet uddannelse eller forberedende grunduddannelse samt private institutioner for gymnasiale uddannelser (retsinformation.dk), accessed December 2023.

student councils, where they exist, must be represented on the board of directors of the institution with two representatives, one of whom has voting rights. The student council representative may vote on all aspects related to the VET institution, including issues related to administration, budgets, teaching, etc.

Despite the strong encouragement in the ministerial order, however, many VET schools do not have student councils. In a survey conducted by the Confederation of Danish Student Councils in VET schools (*Erhvervsskolernes Elevorganisation* (EEO)), this is explained by a lack of commitment among learners and by practical barriers that prevent them from participating, notably the fact that they spend the majority of their learning trajectory as apprentices in enterprises. Also, many learners felt that the efforts of the student council did not make any real difference to conditions.

The Confederation of Danish Student Councils in VET schools therefore took the initiative in 2021 to produce a handbook[18] with practical information on establishing and running student councils, backed up by relevant documentation (the ministerial order) and examples of good practice. This handbook is based on a study of conditions for student councils in selected VET schools in Denmark, and contains chapters on, among other things, systematic learner involvement in VET school governance, how to engage and motivate learners for participation in student councils, and how to overcome the barrier of participating in student councils while on a placement period in an enterprise.

Further information on school governance can be found in the chapter "CDC and the whole-school approach" in Volume 3 of the RFCDC.[19]

Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods – or, in one word, pedagogy – can play an important role in learners' acquisition of CDC, depending on the choices made.

Often, a distinction is made in learning theory between "behaviourist" and "constructivist" methods, where behaviourist methods tend to be associated with efforts to change learners' behaviour in conformity with predefined models (e.g. "a good worker"). Constructivist methods, on the other hand, do not operate with predefined models, but encourage learners to become actively involved by drawing on both their own as well as fellow learners' experiences and engaging in processes of discovery, challenge, critical analysis, comparison and reflection.[20]

Behaviourist methodologies are dominant in a VET context because of the very detailed occupational profiles, often expressed according to a learning outcomes-based approach that VET curricula reflect. Behaviourist methods in many ways reflect the traditional way of training skilled workers, where learners follow and receive instructions from a master craftsperson in a process known as "legitimate

18. Project website of *Erhvervsskolernes Elevorganisation*. See Elevdemokrati | EEO, accessed December 2023.
19. Available at https://rm.coe.int/prems-008518-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-3-8575-co/16807bc66e, accessed 28 June 2024.
20. This is a rather simplified presentation of complex pedagogical terminology, but here it merely serves to illustrate a general point.

peripheral participation" and copy what they see until they become competent craftspersons themselves. This is an efficient way of achieving proficiency in relatively stable environments, but in times of rapid technological and organisational change, where occupational profiles and skills requirements fluctuate and the very nature of work becomes increasingly unpredictable, the importance of constructivist methods increases.

Constructivist methods imply a learner-centred approach, where the role of teachers becomes more that of consultants or facilitators, rather than authoritative figures with a monopoly on decisions concerning what is perceived as right and wrong in a situation. Also, they develop learners' capabilities in terms of critical thinking and reflection. For these reasons, they are more conducive to the development of CDC, even when used in subjects which do not have a clear citizenship agenda. However, the distinction between behaviourist and constructivist methods does not in itself imply any value judgment, as both have their advantages and disadvantages according to context, and they can very easily co-exist within the same institutional framework.

Example from Belgium

The immersive workshop Mondiapolis is a role-play for groups of students and learners from upper secondary education (a special version for IVET has been developed). It aims at creating awareness of the concept of economic justice in the world, using the clothes industry (fast fashion) as an example. In terms of pedagogy, the objective is not just that participants "learn about" this, but that through role-play they experience for themselves what the invisible side of the industry looks like and how economic exploitation can be found in all links of the production chain.

The workshop starts with a look at the role of multinationals and how most products in the world are owned by a few, very large enterprises. Subsequently, participants focus on raw materials and learn how resources are grown or mined and how exploitation starts there. A role-play follows where participants become a link in the production chain and find themselves inside an Asian sweatshop or a village of cotton pickers in Burkina Faso and learn about the reality of these people's lives. After this, participants come together to share their experiences and discuss how better working conditions can be negotiated. At the end of the three-hour session, they discuss solutions which they themselves can implement in their everyday lives to influence developments worldwide, for example by consuming differently.

The workshops are organised by the NGO Oxfam and take place in Flemish/Dutch, French, English or Spanish.[21]

In most European countries, there is a freedom of choice with regard to the pedagogical methods that are used in VET schools, which means that it is up to individual teachers to decide on methodologies during their lessons. This is further

21. Available at https://oxfambelgie.be/oxfam-op-school/inleefateliers-van-oxfam, accessed 28 June 2024.

supported by the learning outcomes-based approach (which prescribes the desired outcomes of the learning process, but not the methods used to achieve them). Some VET schools, therefore, may opt for certain pedagogical profiles, which implies that distinct pedagogical methods are preferred over others, and that teachers receive training to be able to handle them competently, irrespective of their background.

Example from France and Germany

The Franco-German Youth Office (*Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse* (OFAJ)/ *Deutsch-Französische Jugendwerk* (DFJW))[22] was set up jointly by the French and German governments in 1963 as a bilateral programme to improve the relations between young people in France and Germany through physical – and later also virtual – encounters (youth exchanges). The programme funds such encounters both inside the framework of the formal education system (including IVET) and outside (non-formal education).

Since its inception, the programme has widened its scope and focus to also include participants from other countries in and outside Europe in Franco-German projects, and to target not just Franco-German relations, but also broader issues of citizenship, tolerance, human rights and democracy. In addition to the exchange activities, the OFAJ/DFJW has also carried out important applied research on how to work with youth exchanges as a pedagogical tool in a learning context to achieve these outcomes.

Teaching and learning methodologies as a means for promoting CDC is the subject of a separate chapter in Volume 3 of the RFCDC:[23] "CDC and pedagogy". Please refer to this for more in-depth information and guidance.

Events and campaigns

An awareness of the importance and implications of democratic participation may also be promoted through single-standing events or more protracted campaigns. Many VET schools thus organise debates with and between politicians in connection with national elections to stimulate VET learners to exercise their rights and give their vote, but national elections only occur at long intervals under normal circumstances, and learners may well go through a programme without such occurrence.

However, democracy is much more than voting, and many forms of democratic participation and dialogue impinge on the everyday lives of VET learners in much more direct ways, including the context of their learning trajectory, both in schools and at the workplace. Yet learners may not know enough about their rights in terms of democratic participation and dialogue to be able to engage with them, or they encounter obstacles and lack of encouragement to overcome them. Single-standing events may be used to put the spotlight on democratic processes and develop learners' motivation, and may be organised for example as a recurrent, annual event. Representatives from youth organisations, political parties and the world of work may be invited to these events, to provide input and participate in discussions.

22. Available at www.ofaj.org and www.dfjw.org, accessed 28 June 2024.
23. Available at https://rm.coe.int/prems-008518-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-3-8575-co/16807bc66e, accessed 28 June 2024.

Example from Austria

The Youth Parliament of the Austrian Parliament gives young people and students the chance to learn about democratic processes by participating in mock parliament sittings. They get real-life, first-hand support from members of parliament. It is also a great opportunity for students and politicians to connect with each other.

By joining fictitious parliamentary groups, participants prepare and defend their own positions, seek compromises, prepare speeches and finally vote on a fictitious bill. Participants, including VET learners, have the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the life and work of politicians and how political decisions are made. As they work on a draft law, they are assisted by members of parliament and other parliamentary staff.

Youth Parliament and Apprentices' Parliament are respectively aimed at 15- and 16-year-olds and apprentices aged 16 or above, and last for two days.[24]

Example from Greece

In Greece, in 2018, the public vocational school EPAL Korydallou, located in the north-west of Piraeus Prefecture, participated in a project funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe joint programme Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation (DISCO). The project was called Digital Resistance and focused on enhancing learners' critical thinking skills in relation to the phenomenon of online "fake news" and making them responsible digital citizens. EPAL Korydallou contributed to the project's final output, a handbook for teachers called *Digital resistance*, by writing Chapter 4 entitled "Creation of a digital output". The chapter aims to provide teachers and learners with basic guidelines on how to create a variety of digital outputs after their work on deconstructing fake news using online fact-checking tools in the classroom.

On the basis of the teaching models provided in the handbook, EPAL Korydallou created a dossier with digital examples on deconstructing specific fake news and developed lesson plans in Greek as a framework for teacher training sessions. Furthermore, teams of learners from EPAL Korydallou conducted several activities, varying from more classical forms such as creating PowerPoint presentations, posters, leaflets, comics and videos, to more original ones such as small workshop campaigns on disseminating news in the school community, a graffiti in the school grounds and a shadow puppet show in the classical Greek Karagiozis tradition – all inspired by their work on fake news and misinformation issues. Since the project ended in 2019, these activities have been integrated into the school's curriculum as an annual feature week.

To further diffuse the digital resistance methodology and enforce digital citizenship literacy among Greek teachers and students, in 2021, EPAL Korydallou created a structured educational activity called Digital Resistance: Tracing Fake News Workshop which has been approved by the National Ministry of Education for implementation at secondary education degree schools.[25]

24. Available at www.parlament.gv.at/en/experience/youth-and-parliament/youth-parliament/index.html, accessed 28 June 2024.
25. Available at Epal Korydallou – Democratic Schools for All (coe.int), accessed 28 June 2024.

Events and campaigns may not only directly address issues of democratic participation, but also the overall school environment in which these play out. If a derogatory or even hostile attitude is displayed towards certain groups, it may inhibit or otherwise restrict their possibilities and motivation for engaging in discussions or activities: everybody must feel safe and free to give their views.

Free to Speak, Safe to Learn – Democratic Schools for All was a Council of Europe campaign for schools all over Europe. The main aim of the campaign was to highlight the commitment to democratic values and principles in the life and culture of schools in the Council of Europe member states. It showcased the work done every day by teachers, students, parents and school leaders to develop democratic and inclusive schools. To achieve this, schools across Europe provide students with the competences they need to function effectively in a democratic society.

The campaign also shows the way in which schools across Europe support children and young people to feel safe to learn and able to express even the most controversial opinions in classrooms and in the school grounds. It has six themes: addressing controversial issues; making children's and students' voices heard; preventing bullying and violence; dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news; improving well-being at school; and tackling discrimination.

The campaign, in partnership with the European Wergeland Centre, ran for four years (2018-2022) at national, regional and European level.[26]

The No Hate Speech Movement is a youth campaign led by the Council of Europe Youth Department seeking to mobilise young people and develop their capacity to identify and combat hate speech and promote human rights online. Launched in 2012, it was rolled out at national and local levels through national campaigns in 45 countries. The campaign seeks to raise young people's awareness of the phenomenon and has produced material and guidelines that can support national campaigns both in non-formal learning and within the formal educational system, including VET.

The campaign formally closed in 2017, but the movement has also remained active in many countries beyond 2017 through the work of various national campaigns, online activists and partners.[27]

CDC-conducive practices in the context of work

As already indicated, enterprises are essentially businesses in the first instance and not democratic institutions where important decisions are taken by vote. It is, however, in the best interests of management and owners to ensure that there is a stable and predictable work environment so that production can be maintained

26. Available at Free to speak, safe to learn – Democratic schools for all (2) (coe.int), accessed 28 June 2024.
27. Available at https://rm.coe.int/is-this-it-final-report-evaluation-and-closing-conference-nhsm-april-2/16808e4a9f, accessed 28 June 2024.

without disruptions. It is therefore important to have forums where any issues and disputes can be settled through dialogue rather than conflict, avoiding costly work stoppages. This may happen at national level through so-called contractual bargaining processes between trade unions and employers' associations, and at enterprise level through dialogues between work councils and management. Enterprises are not dedicated training environments whose main priority is learning, and it is rare to find instances where apprentices and students on placement are gathered for CDC-related activities within working hours. Yet there are examples of enterprises which explicitly recognise the importance of this and undertake conscious efforts to promote these issues in respect of their apprentices through special events or seminars.

Example from Austria

Around 2 000 apprentices of the Austrian Federal Railways attend civic education seminars (*Staatsbürgerkunde Unterricht*) at their worksite and during working hours at least twice a year. These seminars are organised by members of the work council with the support of management and in-company trainers and are of approximately 1.5 hours duration. Members of the works council co-operate with their youth representatives, the trade union and the Austrian Chamber of Labour to implement these seminars, where key topics are the promotion of democratic competences and an introduction to apprentices' representation of interests (in works council, trade unions, chambers of labour). Besides the key topics, specific themes may be introduced in consultation with local in-company trainers and supervisors. These could be, for instance, mobbing and discrimination, diversity, right-wing extremism, fake news and media literacy. Also, more practical questions concerning private economy, consumer protection or accommodation can be discussed. *Staatsbürgerkunde Unterricht* has been an undisputed practice on a partnership basis at the Austrian Federal Railways for decades.

In a few European countries, in-company trainers are required to possess a specific qualification in order to gain the right to train apprentices and students, and CDC-related issues may be an integral part of the courses that lead up to the acquisition of this qualification (see section on VET teachers and in-company trainers). In the majority of European countries, however, CDC-conducive practices and learning happen unofficially, and there are big differences between enterprises according to strategies and traditions in this field.

Example from Ireland

ESB Networks is the national transmission and distribution utility, responsible for the infrastructure of power supply in the Republic of Ireland. It is a large employer, which is represented in all six Irish regions with 34 regional centres. Currently, it has about 350 apprentices (2023), which is expected to grow to approximately 400 in the coming years. This represents an annual intake of about 100 new apprentices per year. The apprentices are expected to stay on in the company after the completion of their apprenticeship. Apprentices can start as network technicians but then they can continue their careers within the company in technical specialisation and engineering, supervising and management

positions. Apprentices therefore constitute a key element in the long-term HR strategy of ESB Networks.

Given the importance attached to apprenticeships, ESB Networks has instigated a policy where apprentices are involved in decision making concerning issues of safety and welfare, which is of direct importance to them. For all teams with more than 50 staff, safety committees have been set up at local, regional and national level, which meet at regular intervals to deal with topics related to safety and welfare and to inform company policies with regard to these. Here, apprentices are represented to enable them to have a voice in matters of concern. Two apprentices have been appointed as members of the National Committee, headed by the managing director. In local and regional committees as well as in the National Training Centre of the ESB, apprentices may account for up to one third of the members. These are selected by the Apprentice Supervisor Team on the basis of an open call for participation. On all other aspects of representation, apprentices are free to join trade unions.

Trade unions may step in and try to offer advice to apprentices and VET students on placements, and in some cases also provide training on issues concerning their rights of representation and social dialogue. This happens outside working hours and on a voluntary basis. In countries with strong trade union movements, trade unions may set up specific departments to cater for apprentices and VET students, managed by specialists with relevant knowledge and experience.

There is often a marked difference between smaller and larger enterprises when implementing CDC. Large enterprises have, for example, dedicated HR departments that may formulate company policies with regards to CDC and related topics (e.g. CSR) and carry out targeted interventions, whereas in smaller companies it is often up to the individual in-company trainer or supervisor (whether qualified or not) to decide on how this can be implemented in working life. In some countries, the representation of apprentices and VET students on placements in larger enterprises is enshrined in relevant state legislation.

Example from Germany

Youth and trainee councils (JAV – *Jugend- und Auszubildendenvertretung*)[28] are committees that represent the interests of apprentices, trainees and young workers in German enterprises. A JAV must be set up by law in every German enterprise with at least five employees under the age of 18 or who are apprentices or trainees (no age limit for the latter) and linked to the existing work council (*Betriebsrat*). Workers up to the age of 25 may also stand for election. The key task of the JAV is to represent the interests of young workers, apprentices and trainees. JAV may cover a lot of issues, such as pay, work conditions, equal rights, integration of apprentices from abroad, etc.

The number of representatives in the JAV is determined by the number of young workers, apprentices and trainees employed in the enterprises – for 5-20 young workers there should be only one representative elected, but in enterprises of

28. Available at Jugend- und Auszubildendenvertretung – Alles zur JAV | W.A.F. (betriebsrat.com), accessed 28 June 2024.

over 1 000 workers, 15 may be elected. All those in the target group may cast their vote in the elections that happen every two years. A JAV works in close collaboration with the work council, but it is not formally part of this. However, a JAV can appoint a member who is allowed to participate in meetings of the work council, and in cases where the interests of the target group are affected, this member also has voting rights along with the rest of the work council. Members of the JAV enjoy special protection, and the costs arising as a consequence of their work in the JAV – for example office equipment, meeting rooms, participation in training seminars – must be covered by the employer.

There are also examples where enterprises have created platforms or forums to facilitate the dialogue between learners and management, even though this is not a legal requirement.

Example from the United Kingdom

At IBM in the United Kingdom, an apprentice community has been set up to give voice to apprentices within the enterprise. This was particularly important during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to foster social connections among apprentices and offer support to individuals. However, it has evolved over time with broader and more holistic intentions, aiming at giving a voice to apprentices within the organisation in all matters of concern, and currently it represents almost 300 apprentices at IBM. The leadership of the apprentice community (LAC) surveys all apprentices regularly (at present, four times per year) on relevant issues. For example, LAC wanted to gather apprentices' views and understanding of IBM's Safeguarding & Prevent Policy, and Fundamental British Values. They wanted to know about apprentices' perceptions and how important they considered these policies. This helped in addressing any gaps in apprentices' understanding and reinforcing the significance of these policies within the organisation. Some of these issues remain consistent over time, so that trends and changes in perceptions can be tracked and analysed; others are ad hoc questions that reflect current preoccupations. Outcomes of the surveys are presented and discussed in panel discussions between apprentices and IBM management. LAC has also developed an internal website with over 4 000 interactions annually.

To ensure a structured and ongoing dialogue between apprentices and IBM senior management, they schedule regular meetings with the IBM Foundation Senior Leadership Team to relay apprentices' perspectives and concerns.

LAC is positively evaluated by both parties. When apprentices feel heard and empowered to express their views, it contributes to their sense of belonging, engagement and overall job satisfaction. For the employer, it enables them to benefit from their fresh ideas and insights to inform decision making as well as ensuring well-being and retention among employees.

Factors hindering the development of CDC

Both in VET schools and enterprises, it is necessary to be aware of insidious factors that may counteract the efforts of stimulating and developing learners' democratic competences. These factors reside in such seemingly innocent practices,

such as choice of words and modes of address. These can be rooted for instance in prejudices concerning the social and intellectual status of VET learners in comparison to students of upper secondary general education, attitudes to learners of different ethnic origin, gender prejudices, or normative notions of how workers should participate in democratic processes. Very often, this is not even done consciously.

Researchers who have analysed curricula have noted how VET curricula are dominated by active verbs like "doing", "employing", "choosing", "working independently", "taking initiative", while curricula in upper secondary general education (preparing for higher education) are saturated with knowledge-related verbs like "understanding", "explaining", "reasoning", "interpreting" and "analysing" (Rosvall and Nylund 2022). Similarly, a Dutch study on curriculum which compared teaching approaches notes that there is a difference between the way CDC-related issues are taught in general secondary education projects and in vocationally oriented programmes. In the former, the emphasis was likely to be on the meaning of changes in society for students and the contribution they can make to such changes, whereas the vocationally oriented courses focused on adaptation – improving the chances of students at school and in society by developing aspects of social competence such as self-confidence and social and communicative skills (Ten Dam and Volman 2003).

Chapter 3

CDC and assessment

Assessment is an integral part of all intentional educational activities, including VET, but it may be undertaken for different reasons and assume different forms in accordance with the learning outcomes pursued and the context where it is carried out. It is often used as a common denominator for two processes that are interrelated, but in principle serve different purposes. One is the assessment of the learning outcomes of individuals (using written tests, oral examinations, projects, portfolio-methods, observation, etc.) with a view to measuring their personal achievements and ultimately ascertaining whether they have passed or failed the course. The other is not on the performance of individuals, but on the intervention as such in order to assess its effectiveness, and whether there are aspects that need to be changed or amended. The methods used for these two processes of assessment could often be the same, but the purpose is different.

Assessment may also be undertaken at different stages of the learning process: during the course to ensure that learning progresses satisfactorily (known as "formative assessment"), and upon completion of it to take stock of the learner's achievement or proficiency (known as "summative assessment"). Moreover, assessment may be objective, that is, measurable according to verifiable criteria, like in arithmetic, or subjective, that is, done by another person (a teacher, an external examiner, a peer group member, or even by learners themselves) whose subjectivity may influence the result of the assessment. In order to reduce the risk of bias in a subjective assessment, it is often done by more than one person. This process is known as triangulation.

Assessing CDC in a VET context is especially challenging. First and foremost because courses of "citizenship education" (or "civic education" or "social studies") – in systems where CDC is introduced in this way – are often compressed and compartmentalised as they are under pressure from technical and vocational curriculum elements. CDC is concerned with complex sets of values and attitudes where it can hardly be expected that learners can demonstrate marked progress upon completion of a course of a very limited duration; it can at best raise awareness and provide a foundation for further development. Concrete knowledge that is necessary in order to understand, for example, the functioning of the social dialogue in the labour market and in enterprises may be tested objectively. Yet values pertaining to democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law, or attitudes pertaining to, for example, tolerance, respect and civic-mindedness take much longer to develop, and achievements in these fields do not lend themselves to objective testing. These values and attitudes need to be developed over a sustained period of time, and progress assessed subjectively in a variety of contexts, typically through observation. This can be done if the concept of CDC is integrated as a transversal issue in more than one subject and for longer stretches (or the entire programme).

A separate issue is the question of which criteria to use for the assessment of CDC outcomes. Levels of factual knowledge are easy to measure, for example through multiple-choice tests, but values and attitudes present more complex challenges. The Council of Europe model of competences for democratic culture contains 20 competences, made up of sets of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding, which are in themselves quite complex and difficult to assess. In order to facilitate the assessment process, each of them has consequently been "translated" into a number of descriptors, which are sets of observable behaviours in learners that can help the assessor decide whether or not these have been achieved. All in all, there are 447 descriptors attached to the 20 competences, and 135 of these are identified as key descriptors. This, however, still presents considerable complexity for assessment. Therefore, an operational model for assessment procedures must be developed that reduces complexity by setting priorities and focusing on a limited number of descriptors. In a VET context, it is often – as we have seen – attitudes like "responsibility" and "self-efficacy" and skills like "flexibility and adaptability" and "co-operation" that are preferred over others, because these can be directly inscribed into a labour-market discourse (e.g. Ten Dam and Volman 2003).

Assessments involving values and attitudes, however, hold a number of ethical issues or dilemmas. Learners have the right to freedom of expression and should in principle not be censured or sanctioned if their values and attitudes deviate from those that are reflected in the CDC. Learners can in principle be brilliant carpenters or bricklayers even though they hold extremist or racist views, so in a narrow, labour-market perspective it would be problematic if they fail in a vocational programme because of low scores in CDC. Also, learners have a right to confidentiality and privacy, and assessments involving values and attitudes are sensitive information that can potentially be misused if registered and stored in permanent track records that in time may become available to outsiders.

But why bother about assessment at all, if this is fraught with so many difficulties and potential uncertainties? The arguments in favour of assessment mainly fall into two categories that are related to the two purposes of assessment as outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

The first category of arguments focuses on psychological issues in relation to individual learners. The very act of introducing assessment is in itself a very strong statement to learners. It signals that "this is an important part of your programme", and not just something which can be neglected while concentrating on other elements. Also, assessment will help make learning visible, because learners need to focus on learning outcomes and reflect on how to reach these, thereby reinforcing the learning process itself.

The second category relates to evaluative issues, that is, contents, pedagogical methods and practices used. It is necessary to find out whether modes of assessment are effective and actually conducive to the development of CDC. For this reason, the progress of learners needs to be verified at individual level, since what works for some people may have only limited effect on others, depending on their backgrounds. Here, it is important to focus on the achievements of learners rather than their proficiency, by trying to measure the impact of the intervention in isolation rather than the total

sum of competences, including what they may bring with them before they started and what they have picked up elsewhere outside of their programme. Only then can the effectiveness of the methods and practices be assessed, and – if they were not effective – decisions can be made concerning alternative ways.

Example from Germany

The vocational school in Boppard in Germany, together with the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, has developed a tool to measure democratic competences in VET learners, based on self-assessment. Learners themselves and their teachers were also actively involved in the development process. The tool consists of a questionnaire that is built on the RFCDC model of CDC (colloquially called the "butterfly model") structured into four components of values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical thinking. To this, the school has added a fifth dimension – that of "trust" with an additional 13 statements that learners need to assess their own compliance with.

The tool can be used by schools to establish a baseline of current competence levels of CDC among learners and can also identify areas where gaps exist. Therefore, it forms a valid basis on which to establish priorities, where targeted efforts will have the biggest impact. It can also be used in the first phase (the analysis phase) in the process leading up to the formulation of an institutional strategy. It has been developed in a paper version, but a web-based version is in development at the time of writing.

Example from the Republic of Moldova

In the Republic of Moldova, the development of CDC is integrated in the VET system in the subject "education for society" with 30 lessons per year. Learning outcomes are formulated in alignment with the 20 competences of the RFCDC.

The performance of learners is assessed based on descriptors (of which there are two per competence) at the end of the school year of a vocational training programme. It is carried out by observing the behaviour of learners during lessons and activities, and it also takes into account processes of reflection, self-assessment and peer assessment among learners. Performance is assessed with the following grades: "very good", "good" and "sufficient". To determine the grade, the teacher applies the following algorithm, based on the total number of competences achieved:

- 100% to 81% or from 20 to 16 of the total number of developed competences: "very good".
- 80% to 56% or from 15 to 11 of the total number of developed competences: "good".
- 55% to 25% or from 10 to 5 of the total number of developed competences: "sufficient".

Students with more than 50% of absence (motivated or unmotivated) and/or whose performance is below "sufficient" can benefit from a recovery session which includes reflexive activities, written or oral. Subsequently, the teacher and the learner jointly agree on outcomes.

Further information on assessment as well as descriptions of individual assessment forms and methods may be found in the RFCDC Volume 3 chapter, "CDC and assessment".[29]

29. Available at https://rm.coe.int/16807bc66e, accessed 28 June 2024.

Chapter 4

CDC in the training of VET teachers and in-company trainers

Teachers and in-company trainers[30] play an important role in the learning processes leading to CDC, as the values, attitudes and practices of these individuals will shape learners' perceptions. Not only do they impart technical skills, but also the competences needed to support social responsibilities, civic engagement as well as personal growth and human values (CEDEFOP 2022: 18). Yet there is a big variety in the nature and levels of qualifications required to teach in VET schools, and even in countries with very similar VET systems there are different requirements. These may include a combination of degree-level teaching qualifications, VET qualifications and/or work experience in a specific industry. However, trainers in enterprises in most countries are not required to have any formal pedagogical qualifications. Only a handful of countries have mandatory courses for in-company trainers.

In a number of European countries, VET teachers are hired on the basis of their vocational qualifications and are then required to obtain their pedagogic (teacher) qualifications through part-time studies while they work (see example from Austria below). For this reason, it is problematic to speak about VET teacher training in terms of "pre-service" and "in-service" training, like it is often done for teacher training in general education. Instead, the terms "initial teacher training" (ITT) and "continuing professional development" (CPD) are used.

A range of different professionals work to deliver VET in a variety of workplace and educational and training settings. These include teachers, advisors, coaches, guides, instructors, lecturers, mentors, trainers and tutors. These professionals shape and influence VET learners' knowledge, attitudes, values and practices of democracy and the ways in which they engage with it. Consequently, their preparation to train young people in the broadest sense plays a vital role. According to the two principal learning venues of VET programmes, teacher training for VET schools will be discussed first, then followed by the training of in-company trainers.

30. See also the RFCDC Volume 3 chapter on "CDC and teacher education".

Teachers in VET schools

There is a great variety of teachers in VET schools. They can teach at lower or upper secondary level, in initial and continuing VET programmes, and they can be teachers of general subjects, vocational theory or practical subjects. These teachers can obtain their initial teaching qualifications in general subjects or in broad, occupation-specific areas (e.g. business, engineering or nursing). VET teaching qualifications and entry requirements to the teaching course show great diversity across European countries. Even in countries with very similar VET systems, there may be different requirements for teachers and trainers in VET schools to be able to teach on a VET programme. These may include a combination of sub-degree or degree-level qualifications and/or a vocational qualification and, in some cases, industry experience in the area the person wishes to teach prior to the teaching course and after the course (for example in Germany). However, there are also countries with minimal or no formal requirements to be able to teach and train VET learners. For example, in England, a formal teaching qualification is not a statutory requirement in order to teach in further education or VET, even though it is an expectation in most VET schools. Teachers, therefore, may come with little or no grounding in CDC-related issues, and often there is little or no continuing training available that covers these.

Initial training for VET teachers

VET initial teacher training constitutes the formal preparation for teaching in VET schools. Therefore, these courses are the main vehicles for developing an understanding of CDC for future teachers once these newly qualified teachers start teaching in a VET school. CDC should ideally be approached holistically and integrated into all subjects, and all students in VET ITT courses should experience elements of CDC regardless of the specialisation they take. The way in which ITT for VET is organised and its curriculum developed has lasting influence on how VET teachers practise teaching and how they embrace CDC. ITT for VET teachers is often offered within adult education for those who move from industry to teaching in VET schools later in their lives. In some countries, it is required that students in ITT for VET already have industry knowledge and skills, therefore their preparation includes, for example, curriculum development, different teaching, learning and assessment approaches, and the development of strong pedagogical skills. Future VET teachers need to develop an understanding of CDC in the broadest sense. CDC can be approached as a cross-curricular theme, which is not based on a single subject and teachers actively have to demonstrate ways in which a democratic culture can be nurtured within a classroom, year group or VET school.

Example from Austria

In Austria, initial teacher training for teachers working in VET schools is provided by the University Colleges of Teacher Education (UCTE). The organisational frameworks at the four university colleges which offer a Bachelor of Education (240 ECTS[31] credits) for teaching at VET schools differ slightly. The programme lasts three to four years and is initiated after candidates have been employed as

31. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

teachers, and they follow teacher training on a part-time basis while they teach at their VET schools. However, for one semester they are exempt from their duties at VET schools and only attend the university college programme. During this semester, they receive their full teacher salary.

One UCTE module (12 to 15 lessons) about civic education *(Politische Bildung)* is mandatory for all engaged in VET teacher training. Further courses (90 lessons) of civic education are offered to teachers of apprentices as one out of four general education subjects, but this is optional. These are also offered as part of continuing teacher education and may be taken later. Civic education, however, can be taught by all teachers on the basis of the mandatory module alone.

Example from the United Kingdom

In England, while there are some elements of CDC and democratic culture in ITT for further education or VET, they have peripheral relevance. In the ITT course, how CDC is represented might depend on the interpretation of the course writer or an individual tutor. From September 2022, all ITT courses need to address The Minimum Core for teacher training qualifications for the further education and skills sector[32] in their programme which can eventually lead to Qualified Teacher in Learning and Skills (QTLS). The Minimum Core aims to focus on the core skills trainee teachers need in order to support learners with the necessary skills on their foundation, technical or academic course, and this updated version includes Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The Professional standards for teachers and trainers[33] was also updated in 2022 to support and inspire professional learning, and outlines 20 professional standards. Similar to the Minimum Core, there is no direct mention of citizenship or CDC. However, two standards of professional values and attributes might have relevance to CDC: "Promote and embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across learning and working practices" and "Value and champion diversity, equality of opportunity, inclusion and social equity". While the language of the two quoted documents differs from the language used in the RFCDC, aspects of CDC may be detected.

In many countries, however, VET teachers have to develop their own competences with regard to CDC to be able to act as role models in their teaching practice and generally in their behaviour, in addition to helping learners develop CDC in their specific context. ITT is well suited to doing the groundwork for introducing, discussing and practising approaches that nurture democratic culture in VET trainee teachers' future place of work.

Example from Georgia

In Georgia, the National Centre for Teacher Professional Development (LEPL) conducted a study in vocational education institutions throughout Georgia with the double aim of assessing the situation concerning competences for

32. Available at www.et-foundation.co.uk/resources/teacher-education/the-minimum-core/, accessed 28 June 2024.
33. Available at www.et-foundation.co.uk/professional-standards/teachers/, accessed 28 June 2024.

democratic culture based on the RFCDC model and raising awareness of the theme among VET school principals and VET teachers. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- determine the intensity of work on the development of competences for democratic culture;
- identify the facilitating and hindering factors in the process of working on the development of competences for democratic culture;
- name the supporting factors in the process of developing competences for democratic culture;
- raise awareness among VET teachers about the RFCDC;
- identify sources and forms of raising awareness about the RFCDC;
- identify sources and forms of raising awareness about the RFCDC in the context of regional and sectoral areas.

One of the key recommendations of the study was to develop and implement continuing teacher training courses about CDC, delivered in flexible formats.

Continuing professional development of VET teachers

Once VET teachers are in schools, they have opportunities to engage with CPD. There are different forms of CPD available, such as seminars, webinars, short courses, mentoring, peer learning, participating in professional networks and study groups, and engaging in various postgraduate studies. However, requirements for VET teachers engaging in CPD varies. CPD for VET teachers is mandatory in only 19 EU member states, and even in these countries the length, forms and content of CPD are often not specified (CEDEFOP 2022). In many countries CPD for VET teachers is voluntary (e.g. Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain). This has significance because VET (and general) teachers are more likely to engage with CPD about CDC if CPD is compulsory and CDC are promoted in the national/institutional policies and strategies.

In general, in most European countries there are three types of CPD available: 1) technical and subject specific; 2) pedagogical and teaching; and 3) transversal and cross-cutting. All three CPD types have the potential to include CDC, and the content and form of CPD depends on national priorities. Different countries prioritise different aspects for CPD for their VET teachers. Based on countries' self-reporting, Latvia included digital skills; Croatia, Poland and the Slovak Republic stressed vocational skills; and Bulgaria prioritised assessment methods. In Italy, the Ministry of Education identifies priority areas, such as civic education, tackling early school leaving and inclusion, and formative assessment, and CPD programmes focus on these priority areas (CEDEFOP 2022: 36). This signals the potential challenge CDC in VET programmes may face.

Nevertheless, CPD for VET teachers and trainers is another way to raise awareness and introduce or further develop CDC for VET teachers and learners in VET schools. Some aspects of CDC are already covered by CPD for VET teachers in pedagogy and assessment, others, such as intercultural understanding and critical thinking, will have to be specifically developed. Ministries play a crucial role in guiding and

supporting CPD for VET teachers, and developing priority areas that promote CDC in VET programmes. For those VET teachers who have been teaching for many years, targeted CPD about CDC is one way to raise their awareness. The best type of CPD that will support VET teachers in including the development of CDC across all VET school activities is context specific. Different countries, different VET schools and different VET teachers will have their unique solution to this.

Considering the diversity of requirements for VET teachers engaging with CPD, the importance of ITT for VET becomes even more significant.

Example from Germany

In the region of Hesse in Germany, six vocational schools have engaged in a project Strong Teachers – Strong Students which offers teachers training and a toolkit to handle anti-democratic attitudes and behaviour in VET schools.

Anti-democratic attitudes and behaviour endanger the peaceful co-existence of a society, and VET schools play a key role in addressing these social threats. VET (and general) schools are places where democracy is experienced, and they are central to the socialisation of young people. VET schools often represent the educational institution that can still offer targeted democratic and political education to young adults. This is the rationale behind developing and implementing the Strong Teachers – Strong Students project.

Strong Teachers – Strong Students is a three-year project that aims to equip teachers with skills for tackling anti-democratic behaviour and attitudes in VET schools. The project is further supported by an advisory board representing academics and practitioners. In addition to the professional training of teachers on topics such as extremism and group-related hatred, the project is also supported by external advisors (external to the VET school). This project is in its first year and the evaluations undertaken by the Robert Bosch Foundation in Saxony and Lower Saxony have shown that this project provided teachers with the tools they need to better counteract anti-democratic attitudes in schools (Behrens and Breuer 2023; Fischer 2018).

In-company trainers

There are considerable differences between the resources available to support apprentices and work-based learning in general in large enterprises, compared to those available to small- and medium-sized enterprises. However, the extent to which democratic culture exists in enterprises does not depend on the size of the company. It depends on the company culture, the governance structure, management, individual employers and employees. VET teachers' attention can be caught through participation in formal programmes. However, influencing values, behaviour and practices of democracy within the workplace poses a challenge.

In-company trainers responsible for human resource development and those who support apprentices are often not required to have any formal pedagogical qualifications. In addition to in-company trainers, apprentices encounter other senior and junior colleagues, work mentors and line managers during on-the-job training

who may take part in informal training and advising. In-company training requires a different pedagogy from school-based teaching, but pedagogical preparation of in-company trainers is often entirely absent. There are exceptions to this. For example, in Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and Switzerland, in-company trainers are required to have formal qualifications. In Germany, the Vocational Education and Training Act (BMJV 2005) and the Trade and Crafts Code (1953) regulate who can train young people in enterprises and what skills they ought to possess.

Example from Germany

In Germany, it has been a legal requirement since 2009 that all in-company trainers must have a qualification in order to train apprentices. The *Ausbildereignungsverordnung* (AEVO, the legal document covering the qualification of in-company trainers in Germany) defines the knowledge, skills and competences that these trainers need to possess in order to acquire the *Ausbilderschein* (the qualification certificate) and courses leading to this are offered by both public and private providers. To obtain the qualification, they need to follow a course of two weeks' full-time training, which can, however, also be acquired online or through other flexible arrangements. The AEVO contains four major fields of action, which again are subdivided into competences, one of which (3.9) is concerned with the development of learners'"intercultural understanding". Here, trainers are required to support apprentices in developing, for example, "tolerance, empathy, respect of others, objectiveness and constructive co-operation skills", and to "be open to all cultures and approach cultural differences with a positive attitude". This embeds itself directly into a CDC context.

In-company trainers in the field of crafts have a separate qualification (*Meisterprüfung*), which is similar to the AEVO.[34]

However, in-company trainers have a multidimensional role based on their professional up-to-date knowledge. They liaise with VET schools, and they have to make sure that the apprentice develops the required skills, knowledge and competences to successfully complete their apprenticeship programme. While the professional expertise of the companies and in-company trainers is unquestionable, there is concern about their pedagogical knowledge that supports the learning process and the delivery of the in-company curriculum. During their programme, apprentices are supported by both the VET school teachers and in-company trainers. In many countries there are regular formal meetings of the apprentice, VET school mentor and in-company trainer supporting the apprentices' progress which can be a platform for discussion about CDC in the enterprise.

The first priority of enterprises, while supporting training and the development of their apprentices – and more broadly their workforce – remains with their businesses. They want to be competitive, make profit and keep their enterprise in business. This is even more so during challenging times, as experienced during the recent pandemic and economic recession. Therefore, engaging employers in developing CDC for learners and apprentices may be more challenging.

34. Available at AusbEignV 2009 – Ausbilder-Eignungsverordnung (gesetze-im-internet.de) and www.bibb.de/de/pressemitteilung_178160.php, accessed 28 June 2024.

When considering CDC, all employees including in-company trainers will have a significant impact on the extent to which CDC is encouraged and practised by the apprentice at the workplace, and these will be reflected in the company culture.

Chapter 5

CDC in VET and the necessity of an integrated approach

Using enterprises as learning venues is also a feature of other educational contexts, for example as work experience in lower and upper secondary general education and service learning in higher education. They are usually for short periods only,[35] and with the abstract aim of gaining some authentic experience of working life. In VET, on the contrary, this is a fundamental and integral part of the trajectory, and a place where important learning objectives are delivered. For apprenticeships, enterprises are the place where learners spend the majority of their time, but this is also the case in so-called school-based VET, which often contains sustained periods in work placements. The development of CDC in learners is a process that requires sustained and concerted effort, and to achieve maximum effect in a VET context, it is therefore necessary to adopt a holistic approach that involves activities and actors and stakeholders in all learning venues.

Yet, getting enterprises actively and sustainably involved can be a challenge. As argued earlier, they operate in a competitive environment where priorities are about staying in business and making a profit, and CDC may easily get squeezed out or ignored completely in this context. Consequently, it is often VET schools which take the initiative in developing CDC for learners and in proactively promoting this towards the enterprises. Yet enterprises need to support the concept of CDC and have an awareness of CDC issues, or at least not undermine the efforts made by other actors. It is not an impossible task, however – as we have seen earlier, there are aspects of CDC that are directly relevant to enterprises: notably social dialogue and corporate social responsibility. At times when many enterprises have difficulties in recruiting employees, themes of inclusion and diversity may also resonate with management, which is struggling to fill vacancies.

Adopting an integrated approach to developing CDC for learners is not just a horizontal exercise trying to get all stakeholders and learning venues on board. It is also a vertical exercise, where all aspects of a VET programme are taken into account

35. In some European countries – for example France and the United Kingdom – it is also possible to undertake higher education programmes as apprenticeships. This is a relatively recent phenomenon, however.

and aligned, including governance, management, pedagogical methods, and other activities and learning and training environments in both school and workplace contexts. Teaching CDC as a separate subject will be far more effective if learners also encounter it as an aspect of other subjects, experience participative methods of teaching and learning, and are provided with realistic possibilities and support for participating in democratic processes both at school and in the enterprise.

As outcomes generally are linked to the intensity and duration of the learning process, a third vector to be considered is the temporal dimension. For interventions to be effective, CDC should ideally run as a theme through the entire duration of a VET programme, both in school and at the workplace, and not just be isolated in a short course or subject, taken at the beginning of the programme. Given the pressure on curricula, this may be hard to achieve in reality but at least it is something to strive for.

A crucial point therefore is the need for a concerted effort – a strategy – both at systemic and organisational levels, that creates an awareness of relevant CDC issues, a recognition of their importance, and allows for prioritisation and co-ordination of interventions. At systemic level, relevant legislation and national curricula must reflect CDC concerns and there should be a consensus between all major stakeholders that this is a legitimate, integral and important part of VET. At organisational level, the actors responsible for the implementation of the RFCDC must develop a shared outlook and agree on areas of intervention and methods – in other words, a CDC strategy – so that joint efforts are mutually reinforcing and not overlapping or in conflict.

Integration at system level

An integrated approach at system level means that all relevant legislation, guidelines and other documentation contain explicit references to CDC and CDC-related issues, and that adequate measures are taken to support all stakeholders in the implementation of these in VET trajectories.

First and foremost, this refers to all VET curricula, where CDC should be integrated as a transversal theme which runs through all VET programmes. Objectives should be valid for all learning activities in all contexts, but in some cases, they should be further specified according to a learning venue, making it explicit what is to be acquired in a school context and in an enterprise context. In any case, CDC should be a visible element for both contexts, and the specific learning objectives relating to CDC should be harmonised, so that they are either in unison or clearly supplement each other.

The CDC theme should be reflected in curricula not only to articulate what must be learned, but also for teachers and in-company trainers to know what to include in their lessons and workplace activities. Also, CDC objectives and/or outcomes should be formulated in ways that allow them to be properly evaluated, so that teachers can see the effects of their efforts. In a narrow approach to CDC, this would be the case only, for example, for teachers of civic education. However, in a broader perspective, CDC is an issue for all teachers and in-company trainers, and hence it should be an

integral part of their learning process leading up to a VET teacher qualification. Only a few countries operate with targeted, mandatory training of in-company trainers, but for those that do, ideally CDC should be integrated at least as a point for attention.

An integrated CDC approach in a systemic perspective is not just concerned with the contents of vocational curricula, but also with legislation pertaining to forums where learners can gain practical experience with, and further refine, competences of democratic culture. This is, for example, the case with student councils at VET schools, and representation in work councils in enterprises. The right of VET learners to participate in these should be embedded in national-level legislation, and areas of influence clearly delineated. Legislation can also specify the level of support that is available to learners in connection with their active involvement in these forums.

Example from Austria

In Austria, in 2022, the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research formulated a comprehensive, national strategy, Trust in Science and Democracy, which covers all sectors of education, including VET. The strategy aims to combat scepticism towards science and democracy, as these two factors are seen as inextricably linked, with conspiracy theories and fake news threatening to destabilise democratic processes. The strategy contains 10 points for action:

- carrying out an extensive study on the roots of scepticism towards science and democracy in Austria in order to identify possible future areas of intervention;
- setting up a central office to co-ordinate efforts in co-operation with the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD);
- creating a database of tools and other science and democracy education opportunities that schools can access (in 2023 the database contained over 500 entries);
- expanding and strengthening co-operation between schools and institutions for science and democracy (universities, research institutions, parliament, courts of law, memorial sites, etc.);
- building a national network of key contacts for science and education for democracy in schools through conferences and seminars;
- establishing a body of science and democracy ambassadors that can reach out to young people;
- incorporating science and democracy training in teacher training;
- embedding science and education for democracy more strongly in all curricula;
- providing incentives for researchers to become more involved in science and education for democracy;
- strengthening communication and media skills in schools in co-operation with communication experts; especially in the field of social media.[36]

36. Available at Wissenschafts- und Demokratievermittlung Bildungsdirektion Vorarlberg (bildung-vbg.gv.at), accessed 28 June 2024.

Integration at institutional level

In principle, in those countries where vocational education and training takes place in schools and enterprises, it is a shared responsibility to make sure that learners reach the stipulated learning objectives and/or outcomes of the curriculum. Schools and enterprises must therefore constantly communicate and co-ordinate on progress and challenges for individual learners to ensure that their learning progress meets the expected outcomes. This also includes CDC-related elements of competences and content.

It is of paramount importance that schools and enterprises are on the same wavelength concerning CDC. Schools might be seen by VET learners as artificial constructs compared to enterprises, which represent "real life" after graduation. Consequently, if what they are exposed to during periods in the enterprise is at variance with attitudes and values instilled at school with regard to CDC, learning processes may be stunted or negated, or undermined altogether. This could be the case, for example, if they experience very hierarchal structures and authoritarian leadership, where their voices are not heard, where hate speech and racism is tolerated without sanctions or consequences, or where participation in student and work councils is frowned upon or impeded. This could also be the case if learners are not receiving adequate information on social dialogue and the role and responsibilities of employees in school, and therefore are not prepared for the situation they find themselves in when they arrive in the enterprises. Initiating and maintaining a dialogue between schools and enterprises is essential to ensure that all key stakeholders jointly promote CDC in their environment.

A dialogue between school and enterprise at local and regional level is not easy to develop and maintain, especially concerning CDC. Often, schools complain that enterprises do not engage and/or attend meetings or events they organise to inform them about and/or discuss issues related to learning. Also, written tools for communication (e.g. logbooks) concerning learners' progress may also be hard to obtain from them. As a minimum, VET schools should have a first-hand impression of the enterprises they send their learners to, but often – especially for large VET schools operating at regional level – there is no personal contact, only written communication. Yet it is essential to make the effort to establish this dialogue to ensure that all relevant actors are pulling in the same direction.

Developing a CDC strategy

To ensure maximum impact, it is necessary to formulate a strategy that encompasses horizontal, vertical and temporal aspects. It should involve all relevant actors and stakeholders in learning venues and run through the entire fabric of the system or organisation. One could well imagine a strategy being developed at enterprise level, but realistically the initiative is most likely to come from the dedicated, pedagogical environment of the VET school.

Such a concerted CDC strategy is complicated to establish, since it implies the consensus of those involved and/or affected. However, once it has been elaborated and accepted by all, it can bring about a real shift in values and attitudes which is

impossible to attain with a more fragmented approach. The actual development process for such a strategy at VET school level may be split into five distinctive phases.

The analysis phase

The first step in this phase is to look into relevant national-level documentation (legislation and curricula) to establish the scope for action. How do these define CDC (broad or narrow definition?), what do they foresee concretely in terms of activities, and how much leeway does the institution have to introduce additional measures? A second step is to analyse the situation in the institution itself and the possible ways for developing CDC – dedicated courses, teaching and learning methods, school governance, school environment, special events, etc. Thirdly, the analysis should also take into account resources available – what competences are at hand and what must be developed, space requirements, financial costs of specific initiatives and events, etc.

The decision phase

Here, the institution clarifies its ambition level in relation to the concrete learning objectives and/or outcomes it wants the learners to achieve, the preferred ways of achieving these, and a realistic appraisal of resources available. This is all pulled together into a SWOT-analysis that identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and, consequently, a strategy or action plan is decided on the basis of informed choices.

The implementation phase

When the decision has been made, the strategy is rolled out either in one go or piloted in stages, depending on feasibility – it may for example require competence development of certain sections of staff before certain pedagogical methods can be implemented, whereas others can be initiated straightaway.

The evaluation phase

At a set interval after the strategy has been implemented, it is time to take stock of the success (or otherwise) of the endeavours. Evaluation is first and foremost concerned with the outcomes (did we actually reach our objectives?) but also with the organisation of the activities (what worked and what did not work?). Especially concerning CDC, it may be difficult to measure in a direct and objective way what the impact has been, so it is a good idea beforehand to have agreed on an evaluation plan and identified indicators that can provide a more indirect picture. These may be either quantitative (e.g. number of learners voting in elections for student councils) or qualitative (e.g. semi-structured interviews with learners or enterprises concerning their own experience of the learning curve with regard to CDC). Note that the evaluation plan should also include details about who does the evaluation and when, as certain information can only be obtained at specific moments in time.

The revision phase

Maybe it all went entirely according to plan the first time, in which case everything is well. As a rule, however, the evaluation brings to the surface issues where the efforts did not quite have the expected impact and where improvements are required. It may also be that the evaluation has identified new types of activities that may work better than those already included in the strategy. In these cases, the evaluation should lead to a revision of the strategy in accordance with its findings.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Democracy is a fundamental European value and it is essential to pass this on to future generations. Therefore, the development of democratic competences is universally acknowledged as a crucial, cross-cutting objective in all forms of formal and non-formal education in all countries of Europe. But whereas many efforts have been exerted over the years in the fields of general and higher education and similarly in the field of youth work, the field of vocational education and training has received scant attention. This is not necessarily because the theme is perceived as less relevant here, but is due to the complexity and diversity of VET when viewed from both a European and often also a national perspective. Several national-level studies have shown that VET learners are less apt to participate in democratic processes and have less trust in democratic institutions and practices than their peers from other educational sectors.

In relation to the concrete implementation of CDC as a learning outcome in VET, the number of variables that must be taken into account by far exceeds that of other education sectors and effectively precludes the formulation of sweeping universal guidelines that can be applied across the board. The most significant of these variables include:

- fundamental differences of systems in a comparative perspective;
- number and (especially) the role and responsibilities of stakeholders;
- multiple learning venues;
- qualifications of teachers, trainers and in-company trainers;
- heterogenous characteristics of learners.

Other, less tangible factors of influence relate to the status of VET, traditions of learning, and the close proximity (often in a 1:1 relationship) of VET programmes to specific occupations and the labour market. The need to stay constantly abreast of developments often shifts the attention in curriculum development to directions other than CDC.

All of these have various permutations that impinge on how CDC can be developed. Arguably, the most significant of these is the fact that in VET systems (or major parts of these) in many European countries learning takes place not only in schools, but also in enterprises. In countries where VET learning is delivered as apprenticeships, up to 80% of a given learning programme is delivered in the enterprise, and even in countries where VET is school-based, significant amounts of time are spent

on placements in enterprises. This is a major difference in comparison to general and higher education, where learners are in educational institutions for the entire duration of their educational trajectory, and other learning venues are involved merely in the shape of short "excursions".

When discussing CDC in VET, it is therefore essential to focus not only on VET schools, but also to bring the enterprise aspect into the equation. This is important not only because of the time spent there by learners, but also because of the proximity of VET to occupations and the world of work. This is often perceived by VET learners as "real life" as opposed to the "artificial" environment of the school. Focusing only on the role of educational establishments may defeat the purpose. If key messages about school learning are not reflected in the reality learners encounter in enterprises, there is a risk that they will be perceived as irrelevant, and consequently have much less impact on learners than intended in curricula.

Involving enterprises in issues concerning CDC is not straightforward, as enterprises, unlike educational institutions, are not dedicated learning environments. While as a rule they do take their obligations as learning venues seriously, they generally follow a different logic, a business logic, where issues of production and profits necessarily must take pre-eminence. Consequently, especially in smaller enterprises, there can be a tendency to focus on the development of vocational skills only, as these are perceived as directly impacting their competitiveness and profit in a way that CDC does not. Also, in-company trainers may not have received any instruction on how they can integrate CDC as an aspect of their interaction with VET learners at the place of work and may feel insecure about how this can be fitted into their routines.

This is not to say that CDC is perceived as irrelevant by enterprises, however. The broad definition of CDC contains many aspects that are arguably important for an enterprise too, also in a tangible and financial sense. By definition, enterprises are not democratic institutions (and neither are schools), but there is a general recognition of the importance of an ongoing and constructive dialogue between workers and management, so that any situations that may possibly lead to unrest and subsequent disruptions in production can be settled peacefully and through compromises before they escalate. This social dialogue may assume various forms. In some countries it is a formal process which is highly choreographed and involves trade unions and employers' associations and has implications far beyond the individual enterprise. In other countries, it is organised at enterprise level and on the basis of individual initiatives. Also, other aspects of CDC may make sense in an enterprise perspective, especially in those with diverse workforces, where issues of sexism and racism may effectively hinder the development of human resources.

As with general and higher education, there are different ways of developing CDC in a VET context. We can distinguish between those that are prescribed by national curricula (e.g. in the shape of subjects like citizenship education and social studies), and those platforms and activities that are conducive to the development of CDC-related learning outcomes, but where participation depends on institutional policies and/or individual decisions. The latter includes forms of student empowerment where learners may obtain direct experience of democracy in action (e.g. possibilities for participation in student councils, work councils and other platforms

of representative democracy in a VET context); the introduction of participative teaching methods that promote the development of CDC-related competences; and targeted educational activities, projects and campaigns (e.g. against hate speech). Gender issues are particularly sensitive in a VET context, where specific programmes traditionally have been almost exclusively either male or female dominated. CDC may therefore also be promoted through efforts to break up these patterns to allow for a more balanced distribution of learners based on real interests and abilities rather than their gender.

It can be difficult to achieve any marked progress in terms of changes in values and attitudes if CDC is implemented as a stand-alone subject within a limited time-frame and in one learning venue only. CDC is a cross-cutting issue, where elements need to be connected and to interact in order to achieve maximum effect, and it is furthermore essential that efforts and resources are distributed according to mutually agreed priorities. This presupposes the formulation of a dedicated and concerted CDC strategy for VET, both at system and institutional level, which has been discussed and agreed on by all relevant stakeholders. VET teachers and in-company trainers must be aware of their responsibilities in relation to the development of CDC and have the knowledge and tools that allow them to engage and commit. Fragmented, unconnected efforts and interventions that are driven by individuals rather than organisational strategies are vulnerable and may not reach the potential impact. Regular assessments of learners and the periodic evaluation of CDC strategies are essential to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and to amend and improve these, if needed.

This guidance document cannot claim status as a final, prescriptive manual on how to implement CDC in VET. It should be read as a catalogue of ideas that can be used for further inspiration and reflection. "CDC in VET" is a vastly underresearched and underdeveloped field and there are still important gaps in understanding and knowledge that need to be filled. A major priority has therefore been the identification and inclusion of a large number of practice examples from a variety of different VET contexts. Yet even with similar systems, it is important to underline that these cannot be replicated uncritically. They have to be contextualised as they are often dependent on a variety of factors that may lie outside as well as inside the system.

The document is therefore perhaps best described as a prelude to a long overdue discussion.

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The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) sets out 20 competences that learners need to develop to live and participate as active citizens in democratic societies. The competences are organised into values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding.

Vocational education and training (VET) is crucial to the economic development and growth of modern nations because it develops the skilled workforce that is needed to maintain the efficiency and competitiveness of public and private enterprises. However, VET is not exclusively about preparing learners for the labour market. At an education level, VET also prepares learners for life to act as democratic citizens.

This publication explores how the RFCDC can be used in VET and offers suggestions for implementing the RFCDC in an integrated approach.

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ISBN 978-92-871-9509-8 (PDF)
€9/US$18

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