RFCDC – LEARNING ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Encountering vulnerable learners during Covid-19

Target group:
Teachers at all levels of education

IMPROVING WELL-BEING AT SCHOOL

FREE TO SPEAK SAFE TO LEARN

Education
EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

IMPROVING WELL-BEING AT SCHOOL
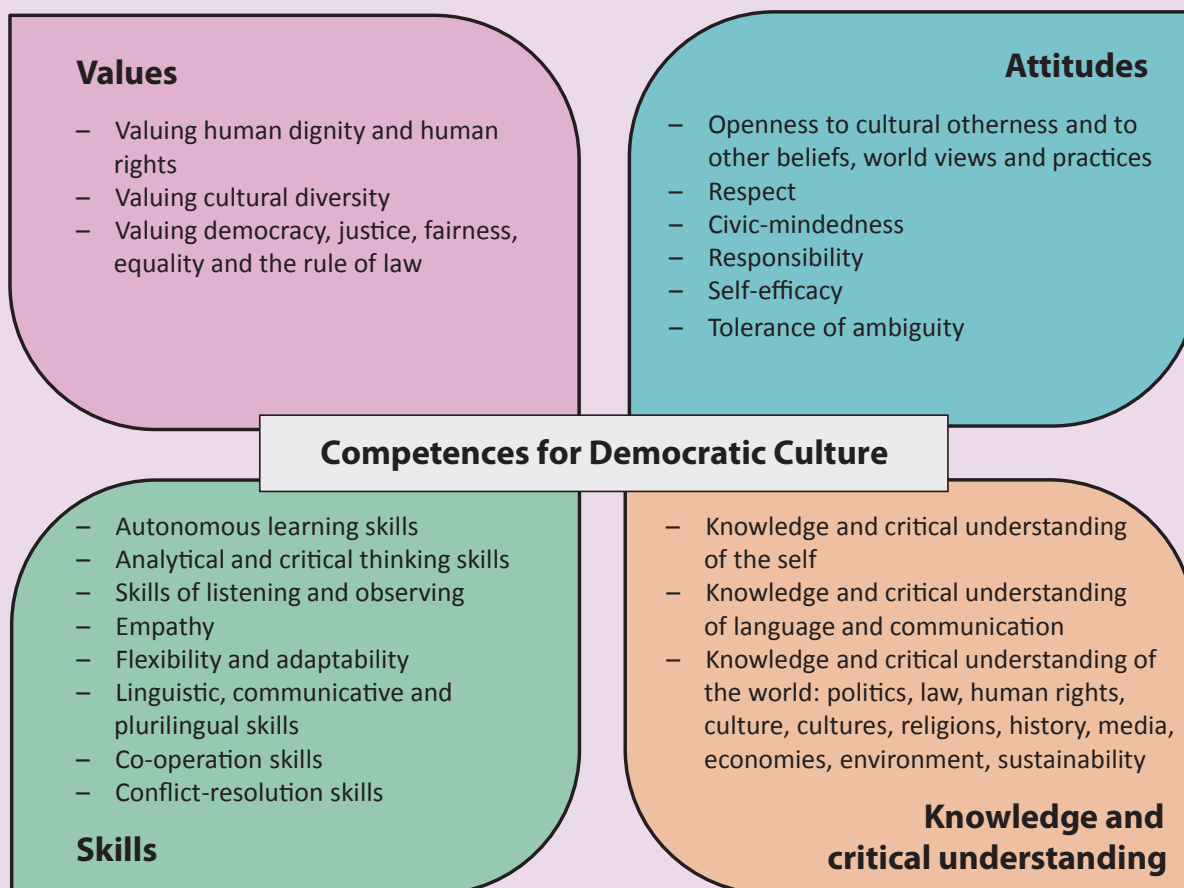
Encountering vulnerable learners during Covid-19

RATIONALE

Learners have experienced the period of home schooling during the Covid-19-related lockdown in spring 2020 very differently. This extraordinary situation has exacerbated existing forms of vulnerability and caused new ones. Learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families could experience an environment of fear and stress, due to the economic consequences of the pandemic for their families. Those with disabilities and mental health issues could be deprived of supporting environments. Learners with an insecure social status in their peer group could feel lonely and isolated, and cyber mobbing could occur. UNICEF calls for preventing children from becoming the hidden victims of Covid-19 **https://www.unicef. org/press-releases/dont-let-children-be-hidden- victims-covid-19-pandemic**. In the period after the lockdown, teachers need to be aware of the different needs of their learners in order to ensure that all return to safe learning environments, to prevent mechanisms of exclusion, and to support vulnerable individuals in building resilience. This activity has been designed to enhance teachers' awareness of these issues.

THE RFCDC COMPETENCES

Values

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

Attitudes

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

Competences for Democratic Culture

Skills

– Autonomous learning skills
– Analytical and critical thinking skills
– Skills of listening and observing
– Empathy
– Flexibility and adaptability
– Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
– Co-operation skills
– Conflict-resolution skills

Knowledge and critical understanding

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

COMPETENCES PROMOTED BY THE ACTIVITY

▬ Valuing human dignity and human rights; Responsibility; Empathy; Communicative skills; Knowledge and critical understanding of the self; Knowledge and critical understanding of communication.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

▬ Completing this activity will help teachers to:

► Identify different types of vulnerability related to Covid-19 and the related restrictions;

► Reflect on an appropriate pedagogical response to these issues.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

1. Read the following scenarios about situations after the Covid-19 lockdown.

▶ Scenario 1:

   Kim used to be an interested and engaged learner, who took actively part in teaching and classroom interaction. After the period of home schooling during the Covid-19 pandemic, Kim has been silent during the lessons, not really attending what is going on. She also stays alone in the playground during the breaks, although she previously was part of a group of children who use to play together.

▶ Scenario 2:

   Since the return to school after the period of home schooling during the Covid-19 pandemic, Laura has been distracted and aggressive. She had several fights with her classmates and when the teacher approached her in order to ask how she was, she shouted at the teacher "Leave me alone" and ran away.
   Write down, as an immediate response, what the reasons might be for the changes in the behaviours of the learners.

   Take notes.

2. Watch some of the following videos. What do they tell you about why children may have become more vulnerable during the Covid-19 pandemic?

▶ https://cornell.app.box.com/v/MichenerCOVID -19/file/632700891078

▶ https://youtu.be/UcDbyZqlL2k

   Take notes.

3. Watch some of the following testimonies from children worldwide.

▶ https://en.unesco.org/covid19/education response/learningneverstops/

   Think about what helps children facing different types of challenges to develop coping strategies and resilience. Take notes.

4. What is your role as a teacher? Which of the 20 competences for democratic culture (specified by the RFCDC) are of importance (choose the four most relevant)? If possible, exchange your thoughts with 1-3 colleagues.

5. Among the learners you teach, which ones might have experienced stress, violence or for other reasons have become vulnerable during Covid-19? For each of these learners, make some notes on how you as a teacher can be a support.

6. If possible, exchange your ideas with 1-3 colleagues on how to build an inclusive and safe classroom environment in the time after the pandemic.

MATERIALS OR RESOURCES REQUIRED

▶ A device on which to watch videos and take notes.

FURTHER READING

- ▶ **https://www.stompoutbullying.org/blog/cyberbullying-during-covid-19/**
- ▶ **https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/news/covid19-global-solidarity-key-protect-children-during-and-after-crisis-we-are-all-together**
- ▶ **https://theconversation.com/4-strategies-to-support-vulnerable-students-when-schools-reopen-after-coronavirus-136201**

www.coe.int/education

www.coe.int/en/web/education/covid-19

www.coe.int/free-to-speak-safe-to-learn

www.coe.int/rfcdc

ENG

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE