RFCDC – LEARNING ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
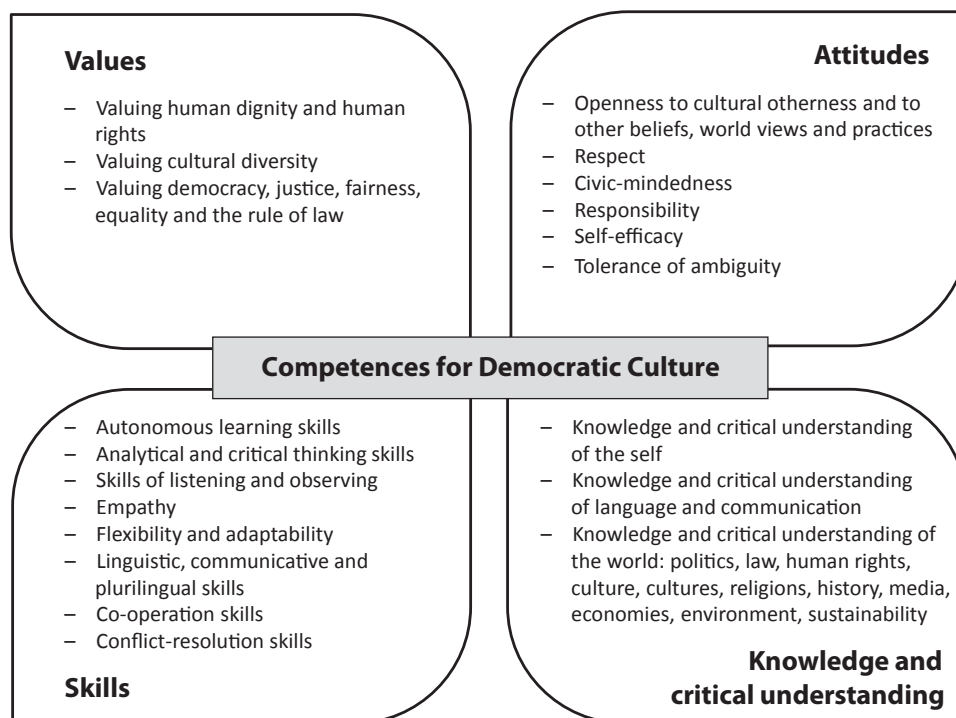
School Council against Covid-19

Target group

▬ Learners in primary and secondary schools

Rationale

▬ The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all educational systems worldwide. One powerful governance body to support learners is the School Council. Some schools already have such bodies, others have tried to create them or are facing difficulties in doing so. The School Council empowers learners and helps them to improve their school community. This activity helps learners to observe the current situation in their school and to generate suggestions for adapting School Council work during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

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

– 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

Skills

– 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

Knowledge and critical understanding

Competences promoted by the activity

▬▬ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law; Respect; Skills of listening and observing; Co-operation skills; Knowledge and critical understanding of politics, law and human rights.

Learning outcomes

▬▬ Completing this activity will help learners to:

► Appreciate that schools should teach students about democracy and how to act as a democratic citizen

► Give space to others to express themselves

► Listen carefully to differing opinions

► Generate enthusiasm among group members for accomplishing shared goals

► Understand why everybody has a responsibility to respect other people's right to freedom of expression

Description of activity

1. Start the activity with questions to the learners about how well they think their School Council is working. If there is no School Council in the school at present, learners should instead conduct a quick Internet search on the topic and share their findings. Emphasise the role of the School Council during the Covid-19 pandemic. Did the School Council representatives continue their activity during the closure and lockdown period?

2. Tell learners that their task is to imagine the ideal School Council in their school. Divide the class into groups of 5, and ask them to discuss and answer the following questions:

► How many learner representatives would there be?

► How exactly would the representatives be chosen?

► How often and where would they meet?

► How, if at all, would teachers or parents be involved?

► What issues and decisions would be allowed for discussion, and what issues and decisions would not be allowed for discussion?

► Do they think every school should have a Student Council? Why (or why not)?

3. Each group designs a poster (using an online tool, online whiteboard or a paper poster) and presents their work to the whole class.

4. After the presentations, discuss the top challenges, give time for answers (using tools for online collaboration) and, if necessary, add some solutions:

► How to engage learners who are not on the School Council?

– School Council representatives could regularly identify one important question which has to be discussed by all classes. Two learners from each class could lead a five-minute discussion, conduct an online survey, and collect the responses.

– Could organise a weekly open office with two Council representatives to record ideas that other learners have (the meeting could be organised online).

► How to follow the progress of the projects organised by the School Council?

– Could create and update regularly a web page (G Suite users can create free Google Sites) or could collaborate with others on group collections with Wakelet which uses Immersive Reader.

– Could create a progress board for the school's corridors.

► How to help learners deal with the Covid-19 pandemic?

– School Council representatives could establish a new unit which to be responsible for the new Covid-19 restrictions. Learners could send their suggestions for improvements to the school environment in the current Covid-19 situation.

5. Finally, the learners make presentations on the outcomes of the activity to the school principal and to the School Council (if one exists). Learners can also make some proposals to establish their own School Council, if there is no existing one.

Materials or resources required

► The six Council of Europe "Living Democracy" manuals (see, in particular, Volume III, Unit 9, Lesson 4):

– **https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/**

- ► A poster creator tool or online whiteboard:
  - – **https://www.canva.com/**
  - – **https://whiteboard.fi/**
- ► Tools for organising and sharing content, for example:
  - – Google Sites **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJcMionb1Ok**
  - – Wakelet **https://wakelet.com/**
- ► Tools for online collaboration, for example:
  - – Google Slides **https://www.google.co.uk/slides/about/**
  - – Tricider **https://youtu.be/dvLuwL9Quzw**

Reflection on the activity and the learning outcomes that have been achieved

▬ Ask the learners to comment on and discuss the process of the activity. Learners should also be asked to reflect critically on what they have learnt from the activity using the following questions:

- ► What did you learn about the student governance body in your school?
- ► What kind of experience was it to imagine your ideal School Council?
- ► Do you see any resemblance between this ideal and what happens in your school?
- ► What kind of new communication methods have you discussed?
- ► Can a school be a democratic place?
- ► Has anything changed in your thinking after the activity?

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY