

Introduction

School is the place of teaching and learning. This has always been the case and will hopefully stay that way. What has changed, though, is what is learned in school and how it is learned. Society is changing rapidly in terms of economic and social life and schools are under pressure to adapt as best they can to the new conditions.

Something that has changed in the minds of a lot of people is that school is not only a place where students are prepared for adult life; it is also a place where people spend a lot of time together. This in itself provides an opportunity for learning from being with others, but at the same time it clearly obliges students to learn social skills.

If a school decides to integrate EDC/HRE – Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education – into its system (many schools enjoy a high degree of autonomy), then it decides to actively design school life and create a model learning situation for democracy education. The whole school – not only the classroom – becomes a micro society. This is not an idealised picture but reality. No one says that living together is easy and free of conflict and school is no exception. This doesn't have to be the goal. It has to be possible, though, to be able to recognise different interests, to clarify these interests and to learn from them, as these skills will be essential for life as a citizen.

This manual primarily addresses **teachers**. Experience has shown that it also addresses teacher trainers, curriculum developers, textbook editors and translators in the member states of the Council of Europe and perhaps even farther afield.

This manual contains **nine teaching units** on education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and human rights education (HRE). The units, consisting of four lessons each, are intended for students in their final year of primary school – generally aged 10 or 11. Each unit focuses on a key concept related to EDC or HRE: identity – pluralism – equality – conflict – rules and law – government – responsibility – freedom – communication. A sequence of suggested teaching steps is described in detail for each lesson, as far as this is reasonably possible.

The nine units presented in this manual cannot be grouped together to form a subject called “democracy education”, “civic education” or whatever else one chooses to call it. The separate units can, however, be used in lessons on languages, geography, history, social studies, ethics and the arts, etc. In agreement with various experts from the member states of the Council of Europe, the authors have developed teaching sequences with a focus on additional elements of EDC/HRE, which can easily be integrated into the existing primary curriculum. Particularly in primary school, where teachers have to cover a variety of subjects, experience shows that introducing another subject will only be counter-productive and will create additional pressure on teachers. The themes of EDC/HRE are not themes to be studied in isolation, but focus on different perspectives of known topics that are normally taught in primary school. The authors have integrated this into the set-up of this manual and designed the units in such a way that they build upon the existing competences of primary school teachers and on the complexity of teaching different subjects. To sum up, from the user's point of view, it is important to answer the question whether EDC/HRE is a new subject or not.

The answer must be that, for the majority of schools in most countries, EDC/HRE is not a new subject in primary school. It adds a new perspective to teaching and learning within the existing curricula. This means that teachers and students are encouraged to work in a different and more rewarding way.

EDC/HRE focuses on empowering students to become active citizens who are willing and able to participate in shaping the future of their communities, (in other words, teaching for democracy and human rights). At the same time, EDC/HRE follows the basic principles of good teaching. Taking part in democracy can, and must, be learnt in school, and can be integrated into every subject, at every

age level. Competence building is therefore given priority over the traditional approach of teaching content-based curricula.

To be sure, EDC/HRE has a content-based dimension as well – teaching about democracy and human rights. Such elements can be integrated into a subject such as civic education, or they can be included in history and social studies.

But the key element of teaching EDC/HRE is teaching in the spirit of, or through democracy and human rights, and this new perspective addresses the whole school. This manual shows that the EDC/HRE perspective brings new methods of teaching and learning to the classroom, thus enriching the roles of teachers and students. Students receive larger shares of time as real learning time, while the teacher acts as supporter and observer, in addition to his or her traditional role as instructor. The teaching models encourage the teacher to focus on selected topics, and to give the students the time to treat these thoroughly – in other words, “do less but do it well”.

Toolbox and handouts – the manual for students

A central principle of all the units is the students’ activity. This idea is based on the fact that learning is an active process of acquisition and not just a passive listening process. The learning units thus become moments of communication, of the search for information, of questioning and explaining. The teacher supports these processes in the knowledge that learning about democracy is a continual process and that mistakes are natural. Independent learning by students is supported through the so-called “Toolbox”. Twelve chosen methods support this independent and self-directed learning (researching in libraries, researching on the Internet, carrying out interviews and surveys, interpreting images, mind mapping, creating posters, holding exhibitions, planning and giving presentations, preparing overhead transparencies or PowerPoint presentations, writing newspaper articles, putting on performances or holding debates).

The students’ handouts provide another means of support. These are single worksheets which belong to the units and are handed out to the students. All students’ handouts can be found at the end of this manual. The complete pack of handouts can easily be taken out and copied for the students in one go. Each handout is numbered according to the unit and the lesson in which it is used (e.g. Unit 2, lesson 2). The teacher decides how and when the handouts are given to the students and how they are collected. In some cases a folder might be practical, in some cases teachers might prefer to put everything into a separate book or just to use the pack as it appears in this manual – as an integrated booklet.

Past experience using copyable materials has shown that the most important requirement for teachers is they should be practical and self-explanatory. Handouts should be complementary and helpful, not difficult to understand and time-consuming to explain. The handouts presented in this manual are therefore easy to use, easy to understand, easy to modify and easy to adapt for the specific needs of a class or for variations in teaching methods. Apart from the usual formative assessment of students’ participation in class activities, the recording of their participation and their motivation, the handouts also represent a means with which to provide written assessments.