

Introduction

What does this book offer?

This manual addresses teachers, teacher trainers, curriculum developers, textbook editors and translators in the member states of the Council of Europe. It may be translated and adapted to meet the specific requirements within their education systems.

This book contains nine teaching units in 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 at lower secondary level (8th or 9th grade, depending on the school system). Each unit focuses on a key concept related to EDC or HRE: identity – freedom – responsibility – conflict – communication – pluralism – rules and law – equality – government.

For each lesson, a sequence of suggested teaching steps is described in detail, as far as this is reasonably possible. Student handouts are included as appendices to each unit, so that the teacher receives as much support as a manual can give. This book therefore addresses teachers, not students. Our experience in teacher training has shown that trainees and beginners in the teaching profession appreciate detailed lesson descriptions, but perhaps experienced teachers will also find some ideas and materials useful for their classes. Teacher trainers may use this book as a manual in training EDC and human rights teachers.

This is a revised version of the manual. The first edition was developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina to support a new school subject, democracy and human rights, that was introduced in 2002. Since 1996, the Council of Europe has been engaged in training teachers and teacher trainers of EDC and HRE to support the peace-building process after the war. The editors and authors of the first edition were members of the international team of trainers participating in this project. We delivered in-service training of teachers and teacher trainers, and developed materials, including the first draft of this manual, both for teacher training and for use in the classroom.¹

What is the approach of EDC/HRE?

The basic principles of EDC may be best illustrated by an example. Freedom of opinion and expression² is a basic right of democratic participation. In EDC/HRE, students should know, understand and appreciate the right to free opinion and expression and they should know how it is protected by their national constitution (the learning dimension of knowledge and understanding). Precisely because the active use of this right is essential for participation in a democratic community, students must also learn and practise how to argue in public (the learning dimension of skills development and competence building). Finally, freedom of expression and opinion lays the foundation for an open, pluralist society. Controversy and competition of interests and opinions are the norm, not the exception. Conflicts will arise, and they need to be resolved by non-violent means, that is, through the spoken word (arguing, bargaining, negotiating – both in public and behind closed doors). An open pluralist society relies on a set of binding rules and strong institutions to enforce these rules, but perhaps even more on a shared set of values among the citizens. These values include tolerance, mutual respect, appreciation of fair compromise, non-violence, and the ability to deal with open situations of disagreement and controversy in which issues have not yet been decided. If political decision making is supported and framed by a strong consensus of order and democratic values, a society can handle a high degree of disagreement on concrete issues. Freedom of opinion is then far from becoming a danger to effective government, but rather supports it as a means of finding fair and efficient solutions to problems and conflicts.

1. For a more detailed account of this project, see Volume I of this series.

2. See UDHR, 10 December 1948, Article 19; ECHR, 4 November 1950, Article 10.

Democracy has a cultural dimension and in political theory this has been conceived as an unwritten social contract entered into by every citizen. Every new generation must therefore understand and support this unwritten social contract (the acquisition of values).

This example shows that EDC/HRE follows a holistic approach, integrating learning processes in three dimensions:

- knowledge and understanding (cognitive dimension);
- skills training and competence building;
- acquisition of values and attitudes.

This model of learning dimensions applies to education in general, and therefore will be familiar to many readers. Every teacher knows how strong the bias is towards cognitive learning, particularly in the higher grades. How does EDC/HRE therefore respond to the challenge that this holistic model of learning presents? In other words, if this is what students should learn, what must teachers do?

What are the basic principles of EDC/HRE?

Broadly speaking, EDC and HRE integrate these dimensions of learning by creating a setting that includes learning in class and learning from real life experience. EDC and HRE are based on a set of three didactic approaches:

- learning “about” democracy and human rights;
- learning “through” democracy and human rights;
- learning “for” democracy and human rights.

These three didactic approaches of EDC/HRE form an integrated whole. In everything teachers do, all three didactic approaches are involved, serving all three dimensions of learning. The balance of deliberate emphasis should vary. We will look at each of these approaches in somewhat more detail.

Learning “about”

This involves civic education as a regular school subject. Learning “about” refers to the cognitive dimension of learning. The standards of the cognitive EDC/HRE curriculum include the following: the students can explain how democracy works, in contrast to other forms of state (dictatorship, oligarchy); the students can describe the tradition and history of human rights; and they can demonstrate how some of these human rights have been integrated into their national constitutions, thereby giving them the status of civil rights that are more strongly protected. The curriculum must therefore include courses in EDC/HRE and closely linked subjects, such as history, social studies and economics.

Learning “through”

Students should not only know their rights regarding participation, they must also be able to use them. Students therefore need practical experience and training opportunities within school life through participation in decision making, where this is possible and useful. For example, teachers must give students the opportunity to state their opinions, both on topics in class and on issues related to teaching and the running of the school. When understood in this way, EDC and HRE provide a pedagogical guideline rather than a curriculum, and involve the whole school, not only specially trained EDC/HRE teachers. Values such as tolerance and responsibility are learnt through experience, and a lot may depend on the teachers – all teachers, in all subjects – to provide convincing role models. On the other hand, democratic values as a non-verbal mode of behaviour will not suffice either. Experience in school life needs to be reflected in and linked to categories and systematic ways of understanding (learning “about”). EDC/HRE depends on both dimensions, and the debate whether EDC/HRE or civic education as a subject could be substituted in the curriculum by EDC/HRE as a generalised pedagogical principle is misleading.

Learning “for”

This didactic perspective refers to the links between school experience and later life. EDC/HRE takes the view that experience in school life matters in terms of general and political socialisation. It is true that education, including life in school, is a subsystem that is governed by specific needs and rules, and experiences from this subsystem are not directly transferable. But, on the other hand, life in school is essentially a part of real life. Many experiences that students encounter in school will recur in adult life, for example, issues of gender equality, integration of community members with different ethnic or social backgrounds, dealing with violence, taking responsibility, experiencing unequal distribution of power and scarcity of key resources (such as money and time), obeying rules and laws, and accepting compromise. Learning “for” refers to the importance of education for later life. It is the task of teachers in all subjects to train students in the skills of active participation, for example, the ability to state one’s view briefly and clearly in public.

EDC conceives school as a place where students can learn from real life experience. School is life, rather than a place of isolated academic learning for later life. School is a micro-community that serves as a model of society as a whole.³ To a certain extent, school may even become a model of a better or more democratic society, as the members of a school community can participate in decision making to a larger extent within the school environment than would be possible outside of it. Learning “for” democracy and human rights means learning how to participate in a community, while learning “through” democracy and human rights means that this community is governed by democratic principles, where human rights and children’s rights are observed as pedagogical guidelines. Democracy relies on a political culture that students must learn through experience in schools, and by reflecting on this experience (learning “about”).

EDC/HRE carries implications for educational reform that address the whole school, involving all teachers and head teachers, school administrators and supervisors. The focus of this manual, on the other hand, is education for democratic citizenship and human rights education as a school subject. Reform consists of many small steps, and the process and outcome will vary by country and context. The first steps to be taken are in the classroom, where teachers can decide what they wish to change. From this point of view, the question of method and content is important.

How is content linked to method in EDC/HRE?

Generally speaking, learning is an activity carried out by the learner. Learning is an active process that differs from one individual learner to another (the constructivist concept of learning). To resume the example given above, students can only learn how to enjoy the freedom of expression through frequent practice – “use it or lose it”. Teachers – not only in EDC/HRE, but in other subjects too – have the task of providing their students with the learning opportunities and tasks that support this process of learning, for example through presentations, discussions, debates, essays, posters, works of art or video clips.

EDC/HRE therefore emphasises methods that support task-based, interactive and co-operative learning. By discovering the problems linked to a certain task and finding the solutions themselves, students learn more than they would in a setting of frontal instruction alone, and there is more flexibility to take account of their individual learning needs. The units in this book demonstrate how task-based learning can be linked to specific topics and subject matter, including learning through projects, critical thinking, debating and discussion, reflection and feedback. On the other hand, frontal instruction versus interactive teaching is a false alternative. Good teaching will always be a combination of both forms, as the lesson descriptions in this manual will show.

3. This concept has been inspired by thinkers like Dewey (school as an “embryonic society”) and von Henting (“school as polis”).

Key objective of EDC/HRE: Participation in democracy			
Learning	Teaching	Methods	School
Knowledge and understanding Skills Attitudes and values	Teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – about – through – for democracy and human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Task-based, – interactive, – co-operative learning combined with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – instruction – guidance – training – demonstration by the teacher	“School as a micro-society” Real life experience in school

Task-based learning has implications for the time budget in class. Generally speaking, if teachers want students to do more, they must talk less and take up less time in class. At the same time, they must be more flexible in responding to their students’ learning needs. Task-based and interactive learning requires careful planning and preparation and is generally more time-consuming than frontal instruction. This is probably the reason why the latter prevails, although it is now widely acknowledged that a shift to interactive teaching is necessary.

It may therefore appear paradoxical to produce a book for teachers rather than students. However, precisely because interactive teaching and task-based learning pose more difficult tasks for teachers, requiring them to perform a wider range of roles and to respond flexibly to the learning needs of students, this book is intended to support teachers as the key figures – for it is the teacher who has to provide the opportunity, the tasks and the media for the students to become more active.

What is the key objective of EDC/HRE?

Democratic systems depend on active democrats. How to take part in democracy can and must be learnt. The complexity of the institutional framework and of the issues under discussion requires a minimum level of knowledge and understanding. Taking part in public debate, that is, in the competition of ideas and organised interests, requires skills such as the ability to speak in public and to negotiate. Understanding and appreciating the unwritten social contract underlying the political culture of democratic communities depends on the values and attitudes that a young person has adhered to. The key objective of EDC/HRE is to keep democracy alive by supporting the young generation in becoming active citizens. Democracy cannot function without an institutional framework protected by a constitution. But that is not enough. It needs to be rooted in society. It is this cultural dimension of democracy that EDC/HRE strives to strengthen and support. This is precisely why the Council of Europe focused on in-service teacher training in EDC/HRE to support the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This manual addresses teachers of students in the 8th or 9th grade. Learning heavily depends on what the learner already knows and what he or she has experienced in life. The units in this book therefore emphasise the cultural dimension of democracy, while the manual for secondary level (EDC/HRE, Volume IV) shifts the focus to the political and institutional dimension of democracy in the community and in political decision-making processes.⁴

4. EDC/HRE can be taught to any age group, provided that the level of expertise and experience of the learners is taken into account. The “Manual for children’s rights education” (EDC/HRE, Volume V) shows the span of didactic approaches from kindergarten level up to the 8th grade.

The "European approach" to EDC/HRE

This manual reflects a shared European approach to EDC/HRE by benefiting from contributions emanating from a wide variety of backgrounds. We developed the idea and the first version of this book in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and many educators and teachers took part in both review and discussion. The authors and editors of this manual represent teaching approaches and traditions in the UK, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany. When preparing the revised version, we were supported by Ms Ólöf Ólafsdóttir and Ms Sarah Keating-Chetwynd at the Council of Europe, and by Ms Sabrina Marruncheddu and Dr Wiltrud Weidinger (International Projects in Education (IPE), Zurich). Ms Angela Doul, Council of Europe, read our final drafts. Mr Peti Wiskemann's illustrations add meaning to the text that cannot be expressed in words. We wish to thank the authors, illustrator, reviewers and proofreader for their contributions and support. We are particularly grateful to Mr Emir Adzovic, the co-ordinator of the Council of Europe in Sarajevo, who has taken care of us throughout the EDC/HRE projects. Without his engagement from the very beginning of the project this book would never have been written. We also thank Ms Heather Courant for her patience in preparing our journeys, obtaining visas or arranging meetings. We are grateful to all our partners in this truly European project.

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