4. Children's rights: experiencing, getting to know and implementing them

Children should not only know what rights they have, but they should also learn how to appreciate and to use them. To achieve this, school must offer a framework that allows pupils to make a wide range of learning experiences in children's rights education. In relation to the three main categories of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC), these may be summed up as follows:

Experiencing children's rights (learning through): The pupils experience children's rights as principles that govern the classroom and school community, and so have a direct impact on them. This category has to do with the development of attitudes, values and skills.

Getting to know children's rights (learning about): The pupils know and understand what rights they have. Critical for this process, in which knowledge and understanding is at the centre, is the targeted and reflectively planned induction by the teacher.

Implementing children's rights (learning for): The children are encouraged to respect and make use of their rights in class and in school. In this way, they are trained for their future role as informed and active citizens in a democratic community (this has to do with participation, both in school and later on in adult life).

Learning in the spirit of children's and human rights ("through") and learning how to participate in a democratic community ("for") is a commitment for the whole school community. All teachers and head teachers must play their part, as must the pupils and their parents. These three dimensions of learning in EDC support and complement each other. Opportunities to initiate and implement the appropriate learning processes are described and demonstrated in this manual. In particular, the aspect "experiencing children's rights" implies a careful selection of teaching and learning methods that allow pupils to experience school as a micro-community governed by principles of human and children's rights. To achieve this, it is vital that children experience the feeling of being respected as persons, and that their opinions are heard in discussions or decision making. Experiences made by children and young people should be respected and need to be reflected upon, as it is exactly this point that links their real life experience to their knowledge and understanding of human and children's rights. For pupils to experience, get to know and implement children's and human rights - indeed to take part in a democratic community - in the exemplary framework of a school is, without a doubt, a challenging task for the whole school community. Not only teachers and school management, but also children and their parents must play a part in order to successfully achieve this. A vital component in this process is the principle of participation. In this way, many forms of participation already practiced in classrooms and school communities become part of children's rights education.

Various Forms of Participation

> **Participation can take on many forms. Participation can start in the classroom or school community and extend to wider society beyond school:**
>
> 1. To inform oneself about current questions and leadership
> 2. To write about current questions and leadership
> 3. To discuss current questions
> 4. To support particular causes within a community
> 5. To found an advocacy group (or political party) or to join a grassroots organisation
> 6. To take part in meetings of an advocacy group
> 7. To lead a Non-Governmental Organisation
> 8. To vote in elections
> 9. To support the candidates in election campaigns
> 10. To put oneself forward as an electoral candidate and after election to take up office
> 11. To pay taxes
> 12. To engage in lobbying
> 13. To perform military service
> 14. To use legal avenues e.g. contacting government officials, taking a case to court etc.

5. Pedagogical approach: learning by example

This manual adopts the classic inductive approach of teaching and learning through concrete examples. By studying or experiencing one or several examples, pupils may grasp a general, abstract principle or insight. This manual demonstrates the three steps that teachers need to take when teaching by example:

1. The careful selection of one or more appropriate examples; deciding on the best medium and method to introduce the example(s).

2. The creation of carefully moderated phases of discussion and reflection during which the pupils - using a given example - develop their general knowledge of a topic and its key concepts. In phases of discussion and reflection, the pupils develop their general understanding and come to grasp the key concepts that the example has demonstrated.

3. The creation of appropriate opportunities to use newly acquired knowledge and categories by applying them to new contexts (knowledge transfer).

To support the teacher in carrying out step 2, a matrix is used in all the units. This matrix addresses the three dimensions pertaining to democratic citizenship and children's rights education that are important to the unit described. Key questions are suggested to guide the pupil's reflection in class. This effort of reflection on the part of the pupils is important, as learning objectives should not stay at the back of the teachers' or pupils' minds, but need to be expressed by the pupils in their words, as something they have understood, experienced, trained in, or wish to do in future. By sharing their insights in class, pupils will benefit from one another, as will the class community as a whole.

Processes of learning will become most powerful and effective if the pupils know why and for what they are learning certain pieces of Information, concepts and categories, skills, or modes and principles of behaviour in democratic communities. Phases of reflection and discussion should therefore not only draw general conclusions from concrete examples, but also address the whole process of learning. In terms of constructive learning, the pupils will become aware of their own personal approach to learning in general, and they will find out what type of learner they are, and what specific