



Recommendations

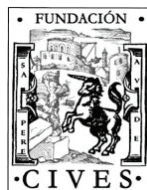
Project-Partner:

DARE
Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe

AdB
Arbeitskreis deutscher
Bildungsstätten e.V.

cidem.org

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS



CEO
CENTRUM EDUKACJI
OBYWATELSKIEJ

Zentrum
polis
Politik Lernen
in der Schule

BOURGOGNE
la ligue de
l'enseignement
un avenir par l'éducation populaire



Erasmus+

Recommendations

Horizons and entry points

There are different keywords the different providers of citizenship education relate to when it is about Citizenship Education with children aged 8-12. The keywords are depending from the frames, CE work with children is related to. These frames differ from country to country (as well as from policy area to policy area): as central terms **Children Rights Enactment and the creation of democratic learning spaces** could be the keywords to relate all different fields of education and youth policies to and to soundly comprise policy programming. Both keywords relate to existing European policies.

The view on and set up of the field of CE learning within the member states differs a lot. There are big differences regards the design and understanding of how the field of CE learning with children is structured and what it includes in each country, e.g.

- education,
- children and youth work,
- formal education
- non formal education
- policies frames referred to and included (Children's Rights, educational policies youth policies, participation etc)
- ...

In line the quality of the concepts, methods, providers and policies depends very much on the question in how far the frames enable for holistic approaches. The more coherent and enabling the policy design is, the more promising CE with children 8-12 works.

- Asynchrony is the state of affairs: There are major differences in the pace and variety of development in the countries, thus resulting in large dissimilarities regards the quality of concepts, methods, educational fields and policies involved.
- according to developmental psychology children aged 8-12 need to be seen as mature for CE. Democracy pedagogical research indicates that lasting learning of democratic competences requires continuous training and involvement between the age of 4-18.
- There is a systemic lack of appreciation of CE with 8-12: despite existing policies and frames for CE with children there is a lack of capacity, time, networking, budget and support mechanisms which is communicated from all educational fields, providers and staff.

Learning places and spaces

The environment of primary schools is definitely of a supportive character for CE learning. However it needs to be clear that CE goes far beyond the scope of school and the classroom. It is of a danger to limit CE to a single disciplinary subject in school, there is a broad agreement from all analysis that CE with children should be handled at least in its transversal nature, thus affects school as institution.

It would be a misunderstanding to align democracy learning only to the competence of schools and formal education as the expertise to develop concepts is mainly with children and youth pedagogical work in non-formal contexts. Here states share the responsibility to create adequate work provisions for non-formal learning.

Transversality, crosscutting concepts

There is a gap in school related to the intention of CE and the practice existing. Despite the fact that the existing frames and regulations offer a broad application, the tendency is to narrow

down and limit CE issues to social competence development while arguing with complexity and a need for maturity of children to develop CE capacities.

There is only reluctant acknowledging for the relevance of CE with children aged 8-12 to get high on the agenda. In schools and out of school education it remains in a secondary position due to competing priorities and/or legal regulations in both formal / non-formal education and youth work offers.

Resources, methods, concepts

There is a surprising amount of methods, resources, materials and further support structures (such as resource centres). It seems that they are hardly accessible and that the different educational sectors face field dependent barriers to access and utilize the materials/resources soundly, although the resources have proven to work successfully.

There are a lot of concepts and methods developed, with a raising quality of the topic related to being distant to school-environments: the less limitation the learning environment faces, the better the success conditions for CE with children.

As European learning material the manual "Composito" seems to be relatively widely known by practitioners from NFE while the entry to school democracy development concepts – such as the COE handbooks on school development and concrete teacher support materials (EDC volume packs) are only vaguely known.

There is a tendency to re-invent the wheel due to lack of access and distribution/reach-out of existing policies, researches and educational concepts.

Quality is facing asynchrony: depending on the back-up of CE as a learning field for children there are huge differences between the countries and the question regards the scope on and off adequate and good concepts. This is more reasoned in the inherent debates and educational policies of the respective countries than in the question of what a good method and a good learning setting can do.

Providers

There is a variety of providers with great expertise working on the issue of CE with children aged 8-12

- In school there is groups of schools and teachers that have emerged to create a democratic learning environment, however the general conditions remain not ideal

- Among non-formal educational providers CE is mostly related to CR enactment and the issue of children and youth participation. Being dimensions of youth work educators seem to be better equipped to make use of concepts and methods

There is strong experiences of cooperative approaches of different educational sectors, however they remain of insular character and are not logically connected (archipelago islands). Thus a broad stadium of positive experience needs to be stimulated to be broadly applied.

The wealth of resources and materials and concepts is developed mainly by organisations that work out of school and have an external view on school. Field and country specific support structures that feed either single sections of education (school, non-formal education, other structures) exist in some countries, while an overarching and interconnected support structure that makes the best out of all learning places/environments is rare or non-existing in a lot of countries...

Needs

Further training, initial training of staff

Staff in formal and non-formal education states they do not feel adequately prepared by university, initial training and claim a lack of continuous training on the issue.

CE should be an adequate and desired content more than it currently is in initial training and cross-sectoral trainings. Offers need to be made better accessible (if existing).

School development, developing democratic learning spaces

CE is too much understood as a single topic, while its transversal character asks for embedded and life based applications: primary school with its rather flexible structure can offer a wonderful training place if teachers are capable to make use of the opportunities and are accordingly supported by schools and by regulations.

There is a need to understand school in its whole structure as a democratic learning place. Democratic school development processes need to be better, broadly and regularly applied.

CE should provide more opportunities for kids (and the educators) to experience democratic self-efficacy. Here school has the longest way to make, while other educational structures are easier and in an advanced position. However these are in most European countries underfinanced or non-existent.

There is a systemic gap regards the cooperation between the different fields of education. It is astonishing, how much school is locked in its internal discourses and how prevalent the view on school as only provider of education is in most countries, despite the fact that schools face the most limits, inherent barriers regards to democracy learning. There is a need for policy development to create interfaces for integrated and cooperative approaches with non-formal education and youth work in order to boost the quality of educational concepts and learning institutions.

Obstacles

Maturity

Especially school faces the problem that CE is often seen as insignificant for children aged 6-12, but there is also a similar debate in some countries in NFE. A general barrier seems to be a view on children lacking maturity to deal with political issues. We see an urgent need to foster and back up the debates systematically to existing research on children and youth, with the aim to develop a perspective on children which is not based on their deficits takes into consideration a resource-orientation and builds on their strengths and capacities as learners and citizens.

There is a prevalent misunderstanding of CE with kids as only developing social skills; especially teachers don't see children capable of tackling complex topics and at the same time claim not to feel comfortable to tackle personal and sensitive topics such as democracy with children.

Starting with CE in primary school age can contribute to prevention of exclusion, marginalization and radicalisation, there is profound methods and approaches existing. However the aim of the learning process should be led by the idea to work out strong democratic competences.

Appreciation

Educational staff claims little space, resources (finances, time, ...) allotted to CE. Particularly time constraints hinder from a sound conceptual application of CE with 8-12 agers.

CE as a process to involve and form communities relies on an overarching understanding of democracy, participation in society and Human Rights. Despite the importance of developing democratic learning spaces, the system of school is in a conflictive position

with its often non-democratic and highly hierarchical structure. Again a need for change is widely acclaimed but remains difficult to stimulate - especially from the exterior. There is a huge gap from policy intention to practice in most countries formal primary education. There is a specific gap of policy frames and support concepts regarding the development of CE with the age group 8-12.

Again the experience of non-formal education needs to be better utilized. Governments are asked to establish the necessary conditions for non-formal educational and youth work in order to systematically create the conditions for success.

Access

There is a wealth of resources and materials but a lack of access. Specifically teachers lack adequate access and claim not to feel well equipped. They claim a lack of specific information, guidance /access to guidance and training courses, difficulties become obvious in the transition from primary to secondary level.

Restraints

The role of conflicting narratives, worldview and ideologies in the closer social and familiar environment of children is seen as a barrier:

- CE is used as a political tool in various contexts
- The concept of values in education is seen in some contexts as something to be learnt at home or there is conflicts with other stakeholders in society (religious, political other groups ...)
- There is the fear of indoctrination
- CE is considered a too complex, broad and abstract concept
- formal education and school structures often seem too big to react and deal on time with kids challenges

The logic of the prevalent neo-liberal economic model strongly affects the perception of education in our societies: is individual success the most important thing in our society or aren't coherent democratic and solidary societies the good we should more focus on in education? In this regard the positive experiences of democratic interaction, activities and decision-making, primary schools offer for socially diverse groups need to be taken seriously.

Opportunities

The political and educational debate all over Europe focuses on learning from the early childhood. Such the soil is cultivated and equipped with arguments. There is in most countries a policy gap in CE between the child and youth age which needs to be worked on.

There is a wealth of concepts and material existing, which can be way better utilized if CE educational structures face adequate appreciation.

CE is seen as a crosscutting issue of a transversal character. As such it allows for interdisciplinary teaching and learning, exemplary and conceptual learning. The learning environment of primary schools can be a door-opener to make better use of these concepts. Life based approaches and the connection to already existing structures supporting the development of democratic school environments can enable to make the difference. **There is already a legion of functioning practice which only needs to be mainstreamed.** No more pilots are needed, but there should be a clear commitment from all educational policy levels to make a change on the structural and systemic level.

There are 3 closely connected CE policy fields all over Europe related to the age group 8-12: CE learning with primary school and lower secondary students, Children Rights Enactment, Children and youth participation. However these fields seem to be not well connected and are stuck in their inherent field logics. Thus policy programming can enormously change the situation if thought well

and designed properly. However not in all states CE with children aged 8-12 is embedded in all policy fields and often is reduced to education policies; also not all states in Europe do have children and youth policies. A holistic approach aiming for coherence in social, children and youth, educational policies would create the necessary frames for success. A basic requirement to develop adequate learning conditions on the national state level is the existence of a system and structure of youth work where CE is integral part of.

There is broad research in the field of developmental psychology, early childhood learning, democracy education with kids which give the evidence for political action to create support and success conditions for democracy learning with kids in primary school age.

For educational policies and practices we recommend concretely

- to have a look at the interrelated foci and aims of the policies on the European levels as well as on the respective national levels of educational and children and youth policies, as a transversal approach which aims to put children at the heart of the agenda is most promising
- to realize that a holistic perspective on CE learning with children aged 8-12 involves a lot of different actors on all levels
- to understand this variety of actors as extremely positive enabling condition which needs to be guaranteed in its infrastructural dimension
- to understand that the enactment for democracy is a transversal issue where all of the involved players, parties and actors have their field-inherent entry points (curricular frames, youth work conditions, legislations on youth, children and education policies, anti-discrimination policies, childrens rights enactment, etc.)
- to realize that the entry points for democracy learning and citizenship education in these frames are not only related to the sole topic of democracy as subject but are of a transversal nature and can be utilized accordingly (e.g. media education, as transversal subjects, democracy as a cross-curricular task, learning spaces and environments which aim for solidarity, inclusion and prevention ...)
- to understand that more control and co-decision of children on their learning environment has a quite positive effect on their learning in general but even more creates positive conditions for growing up and in the long term has strong impact on other policy fields which affect also the level up to hard economics in the very end.

Instruments to vitally advance the situation for the European levels can be:

* if doing reports and evaluations of existing EDC and youth policies, for example within the European youth report, the Euridyce reports, the COE charter on EDC review, the Post Paris process, to develop a holistic view on the levels and actors involved.

* to develop an indicator framework that allows to develop functioning systems and structures of children and youth work on level of the national states.

* to insist for the dimension of non-formal citizenship education as integral part of children and youth work in Europe

* to review regularly on the interaction of formal and non-formal EDC provisions especially in the field of children aged 8-12 and to develop criteria for eye-level cooperation between formal and non-formal education.

* to develop support mechanisms for the translation of educational concepts, approaches and national practice into multi-language versions in order to break the circle of pilots projects re-and reinvented on the national levels.

* to link back European training mechanisms such as provided by the European Wergeland Centre and others to existing practice of

other providers.

* to vitally integrate in the COE pilot projects scheme on EDC programs that foster learning between formal and non-formal educational providers.

* to have a special look at kids in the phases of transitions from primare to secondary level and to conduct research what kind of support mechanisms enable to prevent from failing.