

# Preface

In today's increasingly interdependent world – with citizens communicating and travelling with ever greater ease – a reflection on global citizenship is both timely and needed.

Citizenship is often considered a formal issue – linked to a passport or the right to vote in elections. We would suggest that it is much more than that. It is about living and promoting democracy, about participating and engaging in communities, finding peaceful ways to start and maintain dialogue and resolve conflicts.

Democracy can never be taken for granted. Whereas in some countries the idea of democracy is fresh and alive, in the older and more established democratic countries it can sometimes be simply assumed to exist. Yet democracy needs to be continually promoted and supported.

Such an approach touches upon the heart of the Council of Europe's goals: to promote human rights, defend the rule of law and promote democracy – through, among other things, social cohesion, cultural diversity and active citizenship. This is also one of the aims of the Steering Committee of the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy, which seeks to document, understand and advance the contributions of higher education to democracy on the campus, in the local community and in the wider society. This transatlantic co-operation, started in 1999, includes exchanges of expertise, co-organisation of meetings and joint conferences, for instance the conference in 2008 on Converging Competences: Diversity, Higher Education, and Sustainable Democracy.

*Advancing democratic practice: a self-assessment guide for higher education* is the fruit of this complementary and ongoing co-operation. This manual stresses the role and importance of higher education in promoting and supporting active citizenship, as well as the university's responsibility to society as a whole. It builds on work already carried out in primary and secondary education by the Council of Europe; in particular it complements the manual *Democratic governance of schools*.<sup>1</sup>

Both manuals address the leadership of educational institutions, offering them practical tools and examples of good practice of democratic citizenship. These two publications – which can be seen as companion manuals – underline the holistic role of education in supporting democracy within our societies through schools and higher education.

The new US Administration is expected to focus on the role of education in community development. By promoting good governance as a concrete way to promote democratic citizenship by example, this manual will, we hope, have a positive effect not only across schools and other institutions, but throughout wider communities and societies as a whole.

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1. G. Bäckman and B. Trafford, *Democratic governance of schools*, Strasbourg, January 2007.



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## Executive summary

This manual suggests practical ways to promote democratic behaviour at institutions of higher education. We intend this manual to be seen, discussed and used by the very highest levels of leadership in tertiary education, but we expect it to be useful to anyone who wishes to expand democratic practice at their college or university.

The suggestions here, when taken together, can be used as a self-analytic tool to assess how well your college is modelling democracy and engaging in democratic activities. If democracy is already well entrenched at your institution, you can use this manual as a mechanism to show just how well you are doing. If you are trying to extend the use of democratic structures, this manual should support your efforts. And if you believe that such a structure is missing, we hope this manual will serve as a road map to get you on your way.

We begin by explaining why democratic governance is needed in higher education. From international security to the global economy, the world's future depends on higher education, and not only to educate its leaders. Post-secondary education is a critical component in any plans for a vibrant future and in promoting democracy.

Along with the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy (IC), the Council of Europe has attempted in recent years to support democratic practice in education and offered practical means to do so. This guide continues in that vein.

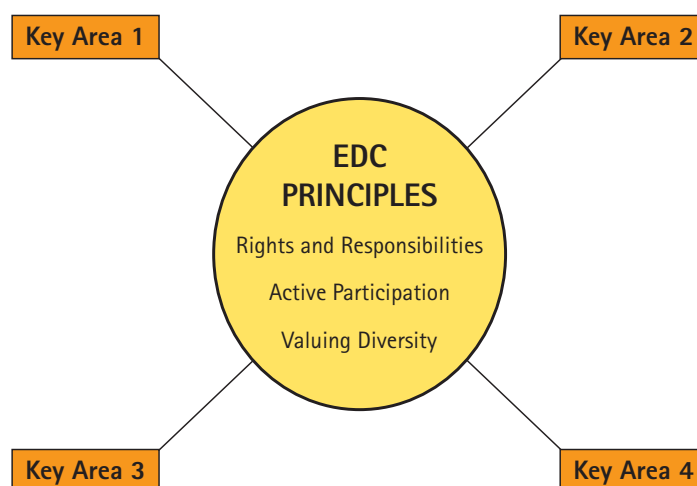
Chapter 3 presents the four key areas that university and college leadership must address in order to create a more democratic higher education institution:

- governance, leadership and public accountability;
- value-centred education;
- post-secondary access; and
- student participation.

Although leaders have other duties as well as the above, these key areas are where any change of this type must begin. We recognise that, while democratic practice needs broad participation, leadership is also essential in creating an atmosphere in which participation is encouraged and democratic practice is implemented throughout the institution. Thus, we describe our methods for creating a practical tool for change, and follow that by presenting stages of democratic development in each key area.

At each stage, key areas are judged by the Council of Europe's three principles for Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC), as schematically shown in Figure 1. Each stage is meant to describe the activities and behaviours of different constituencies within the institution, looking at the level of democracy that exists and the path an institution would follow in trying to become more democratic. The fourth stage of each aspect of the key area identifies an ideal situation likely to reflect democratic practice.

Figure 1: The Council of Europe's principles of Education for Democratic Citizenship



Chapter 4 identifies where your institution stands, in each key area, in relation to the three principles of EDC: Rights and Responsibilities, Active Participation and Valuing Diversity. The goal here is to explain more fully each stage, so that users of this manual can assess their own practice and begin to plan how their institution can reach a higher stage in each key area. Chapter 5 continues the analysis and suggests ways to achieve a more democratic institution.

Chapter 6 highlights the work being done by higher education institutions on both sides of the Atlantic to promote their own democratic behaviour and democracy in general, focusing on issues like access, community engagement and student participation in governance. Chapter 7 attempts to anticipate your questions about implementing changes at your institution and getting others to participate.

The proposals put forward within this manual are not easy and cannot be put into practice all at once. But for those looking to advance democratic practices at their institutions, this guide provides a comprehensive set of tools to get you started.

# Chapter 1

## Education for Democratic Citizenship

### Students lead the way

The 1960s are often seen now as a period of peak civic activism. Global anti-war protests, the civil rights movement and student activism combined to create high levels of involvement worldwide. After that, participatory democracy seemed to decline. Apathy about politics and distrust of public figures led many people to turn off and drop out of civic work, while many political leaders intentionally disengaged the populace in the name of national security.

However, recent events indicate that young people are not satisfied with the current state of affairs, and are increasingly willing and able to become engaged, democratic citizens. Young voters came out in large numbers for the 2008 US presidential election, increasing their turnout by more than fifteen percentage points compared to 1996.<sup>2</sup> Student protests in France, immigration reform marches throughout the United States, calls to withdraw investment from Sudan over the situation in Darfur, and rallies in favour of marriage rights for gays and lesbians in California are among the most visible examples of youth actively supporting their beliefs. But every cause, from anti-war protests to the environment, from education rights to Africa, from breast cancer to human rights, has a cadre of young people engaged on its behalf.

The engagement of young people is perhaps most evident on campus. For centuries, students have been active in attempting to reform social ills, and empirical research reveals that post-secondary students are more likely to be civically engaged than their peers who are not in higher education.<sup>3</sup> Students lead the way when it comes to social involvement among youth.

This activism is not an excuse for college administrators and faculty to absolve themselves of their social responsibility to mould the next generation of democratic citizens. In fact, just the opposite: colleges and universities have a critical role to play in expanding students' ability to effect change and in promoting active participation and citizenship. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a unique capacity and ability to develop social values by encouraging civic activity and engagement in democratic decision-making, on and off campus.

Students' participation in policy decisions at their HEI has a particularly important effect, since those decisions not only affect students' daily lives, but also allow them to see themselves as civic actors with real influence. By modelling democratic governance and expanding opportunities for participation, higher educational leaders can set an agenda for public involvement and demonstrate their own commitment to civic responsibility.

### Where EDC/HRE comes in

This manual promotes such efforts by HEIs to take on civic responsibilities. It provides a self-assessment tool for examining the extent of democratic governance and participation at your institution. It continues the efforts of the Council of Europe to raise the profile of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and Human Rights Education (HRE) throughout the world.

2. Nonprofitvote.org.

3. Levine, P. (October 2006), *Higher education and civic engagement: Summary*, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at: [www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS06\\_collegesummary.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS06_collegesummary.pdf) (accessed 23 December 2008).

EDC/HRE “is a set of practices and activities designed to help young people and adults to play an active part in democratic life and exercise their rights and responsibilities in society”,<sup>4</sup> and therefore is particularly relevant to the goals of post-secondary education. Along with the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy (IC), the Council of Europe supports institutions of higher education that are committed to fulfilling their civic duty and promoting the expansion of democracy. Through research projects, publications, and discussion fora, the Council of Europe hopes to advance democratic practice and encourage greater participation within institutions, and between them and their regions.

An institution that values EDC/HRE will have a governance structure that promotes and reflects democratic participation at the very highest levels of leadership. Although senior-level administrators have many responsibilities, from fiscal supervision and fund raising to crisis management, the specific measures we recommend here focus on everyday opportunities for supporting a democratic agenda. In some cases, this means taking direct action as a leader. But in all instances, it requires a vision of how the institution can become more democratic, then realising that vision by motivating others to implement needed changes in policies and practices.

What we are suggesting is not new. Colleges and universities in the USA, from the inception of the higher education system there, have set out to serve the greater social order (a notion reflected in nearly every institutional mission statement). Higher education institutions were established in the colonial era, in part to serve a broader social cause. In the 19th century, states were given federal territory to create land-grant colleges and universities, with the purpose of fulfilling a national agricultural and mechanical need. Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, research universities around the world have brought advances in science, medicine and technology.

## This manual

The intersection of higher learning and civic development has always existed. Our purpose here is to expand the intentionality of that relationship by having democratic participation become a central tenet of tertiary education. With that in mind, this manual concentrates on a particular governance role, one more closely linked to the educational purposes of HEIs.

What is, perhaps, unique about this manual is that it traverses the various systems of higher education in Europe and the United States while offering recommendations to increase the level of participatory democracy. For many reasons (some of which will be discussed below), this presents challenges of appropriateness, terminology and expectation. But by targeting audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, this manual provides an opportunity to connect US and European institutions in the global movement for civic engagement.

We recognise the wide variation in governance structures within and between the USA and Europe. Not only are there differences in how institutions are funded, from public to private financing, but distinctions in how institutions are governed within these classes. For example, universities in the USA and in several European countries are generally divided into two categories: public and privately governed. However, public universities themselves are divided into various governance models, from higher education systems with branch campuses, to consortia, to singular institutions with satellite sites.

Correspondingly, there are vast differences in how students are aided financially to be able to attend college. One significant difference between the two sides of the Atlantic is the existence of community colleges in the USA. These two-year institutions typically offer a wide array of curricula with varying purposes, from academic courses to vocational training to personal-interest courses. In most instances, community colleges offer open access, meaning they are a gateway to post-secondary education for many students (particularly under-represented students), and often serve as a bridge to baccalaureate-granting institutions. Thus, we cannot talk about issues of

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4. See: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/default\\_EN.asp?](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/default_EN.asp?)



access or affordability in the United States without mentioning the community college system – a system that is largely absent from Europe.

All of this is to say, therefore, that not every recommendation in this manual (for instance, those regarding boards of trustees or external authorities) is appropriate for every HEI. But if read in the aggregate, we believe the totality of suggestions will be helpful for those attempting to promote democratic activity within their own institution.

## **What is the purpose of this manual?**

The intention here is to offer practical recommendations for advancing democratic behaviour at your school. As you will see, practice is dependent on the context. In some instances, our recommendations are directly connected to governance of the institution and aimed at those entrusted with making executive decisions. In other cases, we offer suggestions for modelling democratic leadership. Although our intention is for this manual to be seen, discussed and used by the very highest levels of leadership at your college or university, we expect its recommendations to be useful to anyone wishing to expand democratic practice at your institution. Therefore, for those institutions that already approach an egalitarian governance structure, this document will serve as a source of further support. For those that have some work to do, we hope to jump-start the engine of democracy with this tool.

## **How is this manual to be used?**

This manual is meant as a self-analytic tool to assess how well your institution is modelling democracy and engaging in democratic activities. If democracy is already well entrenched in your HEI, we hope you will use this as a mechanism to demonstrate just how well you are doing. If you are attempting to incorporate more democratic structures, this manual should support your efforts. And if you believe that changes of this type are needed at your school, we hope this document will serve as a road map to help get you on your way.

Thus, we begin by answering questions (in Chapter 2) about why democratic governance is needed in higher education and what role higher education plays in advancing democracy. From international security to the global economy, higher education is critical. If the world is to have a vibrant future, it needs higher education – and not only to educate our future leaders. Along with the International Consortium, the Council of Europe has attempted in recent years to document the dearth of democratic practice in education and to suggest practical steps to reverse the negative trend. This manual is an important addition to those efforts.

Chapter 3 presents the four key areas this manual focuses on, key areas that we believe institutional leadership must address if it desires to create a more democratic university:

- governance, leadership and public accountability;
- value-centred education;
- post-secondary access; and
- student participation.

Although leaders have many other duties, these four are, we believe, where any change of this type must begin. We begin by describing how we create a practical tool for change, and then present the stages of democratic development in each key area (following the Council of Europe's three principles for EDC). At each stage we describe the activities and behaviours of different members of the institution, based on the level of democracy that exists, and show exactly how an institution might try to adopt more democratic procedures. The fourth stage of each aspect of the key area identifies an ideal situation likely to reflect democratic practice.

Chapter 4 helps you begin to identify where your institution stands in each key area, in relation to the three principles of EDC (rights and responsibilities; active participation; and valuing diversity). The aim here is to explain more fully each stage, so that users of this manual can assess their

own practices and begin to plan ways that their institution can reach a higher stage in each key area. Chapter 5 continues the analysis and suggests how to achieve a more democratic institution. Obviously, these are very general scenarios. But our advice on how to move from one step to the next is based on practical solutions to help your efforts.

Chapter 6 highlights the work being done by institutions in the USA and Europe to promote democratic behaviour within their university and democracy in general, focusing on issues like access, community engagement and student participation in governance. In Chapter 7, we try to anticipate questions about implementing changes at your institution and getting others to participate. Obviously, we cannot answer every question nor address every scenario. But, for those looking to make their institution operate more democratically, this manual will help.

## Terminology

Although there are many similarities between higher education in the United States and in Europe, some terms do not translate from one continent to the other. Some are formally explained in the Appendix: Definition of Terms, but a few are used throughout this manual and so require explanation from the outset. The labels “institution,” “college” and “university” are used interchangeably to refer to a post-secondary school. The term “school” is often used in the USA, and occasionally here, to mean a higher education institution. “Professor” and “teacher” are both used for college-level instructors.

We hope you will find this manual a useful instrument to advance democratic practice at your institution. From tools for analysis to step-by-step instructions, we aim to support your efforts. Hence, we begin with a discussion of the need for EDC in higher education.