

Preface

Democratic values and practices have to be learned and relearned by each generation in order to adequately address the challenges of the times.

In recent years there has been a growing interest, both in Europe and the United States, in finding ways to nurture and support the development of civic skills and values among citizens. These efforts have arisen within the context of emerging and re-emerging democracies in the aftermath of the collapse of communism in eastern Europe. They also reflect concerns within the older established democracies on both sides of the Atlantic about increasing levels of political apathy, and distrust of politicians and the political process, especially among younger people.

In both Europe and the United States it has become abundantly clear that democracy cannot be taken for granted. Strengthening democracy means far more than encouraging participation in formal processes such as voting: it means advancing a form of association or “way of life”¹ which has its roots in community and neighbourhood life and relationships. Civil-society organisations, such as national or regional ministries, local authorities, municipalities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private foundations, therefore have a key role alongside government in fostering democratic values and practices.

Schools and universities have long been recognised as having an important part to play in upholding democratic institutions and practices. Schools are community institutions par excellence. They are situated at the heart of community life both physically and socially. Together with institutions of higher education they form a “strategic subsystem”, which perhaps more than any other has the capacity to influence the functioning of society as a whole.

Yet while the civic potential of schools and universities has often been stated, it has not always been realised in practice. In Europe research suggests the existence of a considerable “implementation gap” at all levels and in all sectors of education, between policy intentions and practice in this field.² Similarly, despite the considerable interest in “service learning” in the United States, the emphasis in American schools and colleges has tended to be on the curricular benefits rather than the potential for fostering democratic values and practices.³

1. Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: Macmillan.

2. Birzèa, C., Kerr, D., Mikkelsen, R., Froumin, I., Losito, B., Pol, M. and Sardoc, M. (2004). *All-European Study on EDC Policies*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

3. Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., Beaumont, E. and Stephens, J. (2003). *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; Hartley, M. and Soo, D. (2009). “Building democracy’s university: university–community partnerships and the emergent civic engagement movement.” In Tight, M., Mok, K. H., Huisman J., and Morphew, C. C. (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Higher Education*. New York, NY: Routledge Press, pp. 397-408.

Moreover, while examples of school–community and university–community partnerships can be found, especially in the United States, in neither the United States or in Europe are there significant numbers of partnerships that draw together the resources of schools, universities, community members and organisations on issues of shared concern. Such multifaceted partnerships have the potential to considerably benefit everyone concerned. Communities can help universities to ground their academic work in everyday practical reality and make learning more relevant. Sociology students can come to understand the complex issue of homelessness by working with professionals in the community that serve this population rather than by merely reading a textbook. Schools can provide physical facilities and equipment to community groups thus becoming sites for community activities. Universities can provide technical and research-based support for both schools and local communities in dealing with the issues facing them.

To fulfil its civic potential, school–community–university partnering requires a different approach from that found in school–community or university–community projects. Firstly, such partnerships must place an emphasis on the development of the civic skills and capacities of participants as well as the solving of specific problems. Secondly, they require the creation of reciprocal relationships between schools and universities and their local communities, instead of the more usual “one-way”, or “top-down” model. Thirdly, they must focus as much on the process of problem solving as on the intended product or outcome of the partnership. This need not entail the creation of a completely new form of community engagement programme. It does, however, mean making existing types of programme more participatory and inclusive – for example by recognising and valuing the contributions of the different partners equally and encouraging and enabling communities to play a more active part in the definition and solution of the problems that face them – and building elements of participation and inclusion into new programmes as a matter of course.

Introduction

The purpose of this tool is to highlight the potential of school–community–university partnerships to contribute to the solution of social problems and foster democratic values and practices in local communities in Europe and the United States.

It sets out to support such partnerships, to explain how they might be built and nurtured, the challenges they can encounter and how these may be met.

The publication is aimed at policy makers and practitioners in schools and universities, civil society organisations and community groups, and representatives of public authorities and government bodies on both sides of the Atlantic with an interest in the promotion of democratic citizenship and civic engagement.

It draws on examples of practice in both Europe and the United States, showing that each has much to offer the other, and is the result of an ongoing collaborative effort between writers and researchers from both continents, instigated and supported by the Council of Europe through its Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights programme in co-operation with the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy.

Intercontinental collaboration is a relatively new departure in this field and poses a number of problems for joint working, not least on account of the varying traditions of discourse found in the different contexts. The terms “human rights” and “human rights education”, for example, though widely used in Europe, are rarely encountered in the American context. More typical of the American approach is a reliance on the language of “civil rights”, “equity” and “diversity”. Similarly, the term “civic”, as used in phrases such as “civic partnership” or “civic engagement”, tends to be defined much more broadly in the American than in the European context. For example, in the United States a group of businesses coming together to build a new leisure centre might be described as a “civic” partnership not because it relates to the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship in some way, but simply because the leisure centre will be used by members of the public.

The need to bring these important differences in discourse to light as well as to prevent potential misunderstanding on the conceptual level has to some extent determined the choice of language and structure employed in this publication. Firstly, to prevent confusion we have used the expressions “education for democratic citizenship” and “EDC” as umbrella terms to include what in the European context would normally be described separately as “human rights education”. In the European literature the promotion of “democracy” goes hand in hand with the promotion of “human rights”. The apparent lack of reference to “human rights” in this publication should not be seen as an attempt to minimise the importance of this distinction, therefore, but as a consequence of the need to find unambiguous forms of language that help to further intercontinental understanding.

Secondly, we have coined the term “EDC partnership” to capture what is distinctive about civic partnerships based on the Council of Europe concept of “education for democratic citizenship” – that is, partnerships that exist not only to pursue specific goals but also to foster democratic (and human rights) values and practices – and to distinguish these from civic partnerships in the more general sense typically found in American usage. There can be many types of EDC partnership: school–community–university partnerships are just one.

Thirdly, we have thought it important to introduce an element of explanatory narrative into the basic structure of the publication, alongside the practical guidance it offers.

The publication begins with an exploration of why citizenship is high on the current political agenda in Europe and the United States today, and an outline of the Council of Europe’s response to this agenda through its work on education for democratic citizenship – a lifelong educational process for creating democratic citizens through democratic practice. It goes on to compare this with “service learning” and other school- and college-based methods for encouraging civic engagement that are practised in the United States.

The tool then sets out a rationale for new forms of civic partnering bringing together local schools and universities with groups and organisations in their neighbourhoods, and identifies the key elements in and success criteria for such partnerships.

Finally, the tool explores the mechanics of school–community–university partnerships in practice, considering how they are built and what makes them work, and concludes with two longer case studies – one each from Europe and the United States. Not many case studies were included in the publication as such partnerships are still in the early stages and being constructed. It is hoped that this tool will act as an inspiration for potential partners through its description of good practice and step-by-step approach.

Chapter 1

The need for a more sustainable democracy

1.1. Why should we be concerned about citizenship?

Democratic values and practices have to be learned and relearned to address the pressing challenges of every generation. To become full and active members of society, citizens need to be given the opportunity to work together in the interests of the common good; respect all voices, even dissenting ones; participate in the formal political process; and cultivate the habits and values of democracy and human rights in their everyday lives and activities. As a result, citizens come to feel useful and recognised members of their communities, able to participate in and make a difference to society.

However, in recent years concerns have arisen both in Europe and the United States about the level of commitment of citizens to democratic ideals and values, and their capacity for participation in democratic practices and processes. Researchers in the UK,⁴ for example, have noted the existence of what has come to be known as “the millennial generation”, a generation of young people who have little interest in politics, particularly party politics, or belief that voting in elections will make a difference, and who consistently hold low expectations of government.

In Europe, democracy is often seen as coming under threat from forces as varied as globalisation, international terrorism and the effects of economic recession, as well as the effects of widespread demographic change and migration, particularly through the European Union (EU) enlargement and integration process. There is also ethnic conflict, nationalism and increasing levels of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance as well as insufficient understanding of how the European institutions work.

Similarly, in the United States, over the past couple of decades a number of factors have contributed to a sense of unease about the state of democracy, including low levels of knowledge about how the government works, increasing percentages of citizens who are sceptical about government and who believe that special interests control it, and historically low voting rates. Of particular concern has been the political disaffection of America’s youth. Trend data from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), which surveys a couple of hundred thousand first-year college students annually, show that the percentage of incoming students who feel it is important to keep up with political affairs dropped from 57.8% in 1966 to 25.9% in 1998, though more recent data suggest renewed interest in politics.

4. Pirie, M. and Worcester, R. (1998). *The Millennial Generation*. London: Adam Smith Institute.

In the light of such challenges it has become clear that although democracy has had a certain amount of resilience in the past it is by no means certain that it can survive unaided in the future. The promotion of democratic citizenship – or “civic engagement”, as it is more commonly called in the United States – has thus come to be seen as a priority both in the United States and in Europe.

1.2. What does the European concept of “education for democratic citizenship” have to offer?

In Europe the term “education for democratic citizenship” refers to a set of educational practices and activities designed to encourage and help people play an active part in democratic life and exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens in society.⁵

In many countries the use of this term represents a radical departure from traditional forms of civic education, in particular in its emphasis on active participation, learning by doing, lifelong learning, partnership working and a more collaborative and reciprocal relationship between teachers and learners.

The concept originally arose in response to the horrors of the Second World War, and was further developed in the context of fundamental changes that were taking place in a range of European countries and of the new and complex challenges faced by established as well as emerging and re-emerging democracies in Europe at the end of the 20th century. The prime mover was the Council of Europe, the oldest and largest intergovernmental organisation in Europe with 47 member countries. The concept was formalised in the Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) project, set up in 1997 in response to the Second Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe. The project had the aim of identifying the different capacities individuals require to become fully participating citizens in society, the ways in which these capacities are acquired and the methods by which they might be passed on to others.

The first phase of the EDC project (1997-2000) was conceived as an exploratory phase aimed at developing concepts, definitions and strategies. The second phase (2001-2004) was devoted to policy development, the creation of networks and communication and dissemination activities, and started to include a stronger dimension of human rights. The third phase (2006-2009) focused on policy, democratic school governance and teacher training, in particular the development of practical

5. “Education for democratic citizenship” means education, training, dissemination, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and moulding their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law. This definition is taken from the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education adopted in the framework of Recommendation (CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers www.coe.int/educ.

tools and manuals.⁶ The future programme (2010-2014) will focus on supporting policy development and implementation, promoting partnerships and networking and putting Council of Europe instruments into practice.

From the very outset, the EDC project has pioneered the practice of social partnering, and has brought together a number of different partners – member state governments, United Nations (UN) agencies, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the EU, different sectors of the Council of Europe, NGOs, academics and foundations. The Council of Europe worked on the premise that education for democratic citizenship is a complex and multifaceted task which cannot be left to formal institutions alone, but requires the involvement of a range of actors and agencies, formal and non-formal, state and civil society.

The idea draws on a number of innovative educational practices developed in Europe in response to the challenges to democracy experienced in different communities, countries and regions over the period, in particular human rights education, but also peace education, intercultural education and global education. These practices are a reflection of different priorities in different settings in Europe and informed by the work of governments and of national and international NGOs. They both exist alongside and integrated into more traditional forms of civic education. Although they sometimes differ in focus and implementation, the long-term goals of these “educations” have much in common, all looking to the achievement of sustainable forms of democracy based on respect for human rights and the rule of law. It is helpful, therefore, to think of each of these approaches as making a distinctive contribution to the overall aim of education for democratic citizenship, and of education for democratic citizenship as an umbrella term for a set of educational practices designed to achieve this aim.⁷

At the heart of the Council of Europe EDC project lie the three core values that historically have defined the work of the Council of Europe: democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Central, too, is an emphasis on active participation – on the part individuals can play in the democratic process, both formally and through the activities and institutions of civil society. At a practical level, therefore, the aim is to help individuals develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes needed to be able to play an effective part in society – locally, nationally and internationally. This begins with a sense of belonging, coming to feel that one is a member of society with equal rights and responsibilities and able to have an influence on and make a difference to what happens in the world. It involves the acquisition of a certain level of civic knowledge, for example about the institutions and processes of democratic government and fundamental human rights. It also involves the ability to think critically and analytically about society, that is, for people to be able to think for themselves rather than let others do the thinking for them. But democracy

6. Please see the Council of Europe’s website: www.coe.int/edc for further information.

7. Duerr, K., Spajic-Vrkas, V. and Martins, I. F. (2000). *Strategies for Learning Democratic Citizenship*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

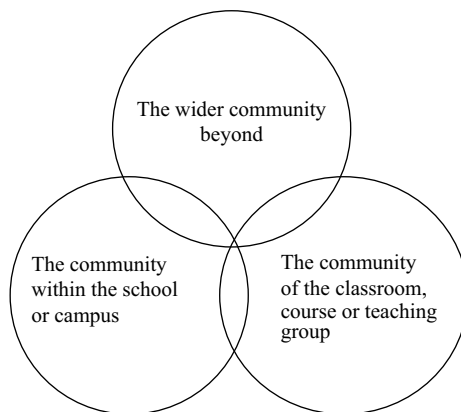
is more than a body of knowledge or set of thinking skills. It is a way of living in community with and relating to others, and demands a whole range of distinctive attributes and attitudes, from tolerance and respect for the rights of others to the ability to resolve disputes in a peaceful and friendly way, find common ground and negotiate agreements.

Thus democratic citizenship cannot simply be taught formally: it has to be learned, at least in part, through experience. Education for democratic citizenship cannot, therefore, be restricted to civic education lessons in the classroom or to the years of compulsory education: it is a lifelong process beginning, ideally, in the family, then kindergarten and nursery school and continuing through further and higher education and into adult education, vocational training and the workplace.

While education for democratic citizenship cannot be restricted to the institutions of formal education – community initiatives also have much to offer, for example – formal education is essential to the EDC project. This is not only on account of the relatively universal nature of formal education or because of its capacity for the provision of formal curricula, but also because of the opportunities it can provide for pupils, staff and others to become actively involved in their governance and their relationship with the communities that surround them, that is, to experience democracy in action.

The opportunity to experience democracy and human rights in action goes to the heart of education for democratic citizenship. Kindergartens, schools and universities need to look beyond the content of their curricula, therefore, to see how they can create such opportunities. They fall, broadly, into three categories in relation to the three overlapping kinds of citizenship learning environment, or “communities”, provided in the institution: the community of the classroom, course or teaching group, the community of the school or campus as a whole and the wider community of which the school or campus is a part (as shown in Figure 1).

Figure 1: Three overlapping “citizenship learning environments”



The need to create learning opportunities of this sort has important implications for educational institutions and the way they relate to other agents of education for democratic citizenship in society. Firstly, it requires a “holistic” approach in which education for democratic citizenship is seen as “both a subject and more than a subject”. Secondly, a more democratic form of governance is called for, in which all “stakeholders”, young and old, teachers and learners have a role to play, through the introduction of more democratic management systems and shared responsibility for school improvement and decision making. Thirdly, it requires an emphasis on active and experiential methods in which students learn by doing, including interactive, co-operative and participative forms of learning. Fourthly, a more open and collaborative relationship between teachers and learners is needed, replacing the traditional authoritarian model. Fifthly, it is necessary to set up new forms of co-operation and partnership between educational institutions and other actors and agents in society, such as parents, community organisations, local government, businesses, NGOs and foundations.

1.3. How does this compare with the American concept of “civic engagement”?

The concept and practice of education for democratic citizenship in the European context in many respects parallels civic education and civic engagement in the US context. Historically, American schools, colleges and universities have been held responsible for the development and maintenance of a democratic society through the preparation of an enlightened citizenry. In the 20th century, such efforts were often restricted to the provision of courses on government and national history or through volunteering. More recently a growing number of educational practitioners in the United States have argued that providing information about how a democracy works is not enough – civic skills must be internalised through practice. Citizenship is learned by experience when people come together to solve common problems and to discuss and listen to the views and concerns of others. There is also growing agreement that civic education must not be restricted to formal settings, but is a lifelong process involving formal and non-formal institutions in society.⁸

Like education for democratic citizenship, civic education tends to be used as an umbrella term for a number of different practices. However, while sharing the same basic sentiments and even some of the same language as the European approach, the American concept often has slightly different emphases. “Community engagement,” or a responsibility to one’s community, for example, has much greater prominence as an organising concept in the US approach than in Europe where the concepts of “democracy” and “human rights” are more usually found. The idea of community engagement in the US is often closely associated with civic outcomes in public rhetoric, that is, the idea that community involvement leads to the development of engaged citizens. In reality, however, the connection is often far more tenuous.

8. Kerr, D. and Nelson, J. (2006). “Active citizenship in INCA countries: definitions, policies, practices and outcomes.” Final report. London: QCA/NFER.

Volunteer activities often fail to provide participants with a greater understanding of the underlying social and political factors that cause a problem in the first place. The term civic engagement has emerged in part because it underscores the importance of promoting political awareness and building democratic skills and values.

One of the most prevalent forms of civic engagement activity in the US is “service learning” – incorporating community-based activities into the formal curriculum. “Service learning” is predicated on the learning value of service to the local community or neighbourhood. In some instances, particular programmes also emphasise “character education” or the promotion of moral development through the teaching of virtues, such as justice, fairness, caring, respect, responsibility and trustworthiness, each in its own way seen as contributing to the creation of a more compassionate and responsible society. Such approaches are far more common in kindergarten through 12th grade settings than in higher education.

Efforts to promote community service, or “public service” as it was then known, in the late 1980s led to an increase in volunteering in US colleges and universities. In the 1990s a number of prominent initiatives were launched aimed at linking these activities with the core work of colleges and universities, namely teaching and research. Today, many, if not most, colleges and universities in the US offer courses with a “service-learning” component. In addition, hundreds of thousands of college students are also involved in outreach or volunteer efforts in their local communities annually. Such efforts have been encouraged by programmes instituted by the school system, beginning at the level of kindergarten and going through 12th grade (K-12). According to one 2008 study by the Corporation for National and Community Service, 68% of K-12 schools (and fully 86% of all high schools) offered opportunities for students to become involved in community service. Nearly a quarter of K-12 principals indicated that their schools offered credit bearing courses with a community-based learning component (service learning).⁹ Higher education has witnessed a dramatic re-emphasis on civic engagement. Campus Compact, a coalition of college and university presidents committed to promoting civic engagement, has grown from three presidential members in 1985 to more than 1 100 in 2008, a quarter of all post-secondary institutions in the US. Its annual survey of members indicates that a third of all students at these institutions are involved in their communities as volunteers or in the context of service-learning courses for an average of five hours a week. Many campuses encourage faculty involvement.¹⁰ Fully 85% of respondents to the survey indicated that they reward community-based research or service learning in faculty review, tenure, and/or promotions – a significant increase over the past five years.

Typically, however, the emphasis in service learning in the US has been largely on subject learning rather than democratic learning or outcomes.¹¹ The idea of

9. See www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08_1112_lsa_prevalence.pdf.

10. See www.compact.org/about/statistics/.

11. Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., Beaumont, E. and Stephens, J. (2003), *op. cit.*; Hartley, M. and Soo, D. (2009), *op. cit.*

promoting democracy through such courses is a more recent emphasis. Similarly, despite a recent call for opportunities for young people to become more involved in leadership and decision making in service-learning programmes, there has been less emphasis on schools and universities as democratic communities in their own right and the need for more democratic forms of governance. The idea of a “holistic” approach and the need to identify school- and university-wide opportunities for the experience of democracy in action and to co-ordinate these with the formal curriculum, both in and across subjects, is much more rarely encountered in the US context.

Clearly, while they reflect different social and political priorities and concerns, European and US approaches have much to learn from each other – not least because neither Europe nor the US are homogenous entities, but are both made up of a plurality of communities each facing different problems and challenges. It is one of the aims of this publication to encourage this sharing process.