

Students' Competence Framework

Intellectual Output 2, Unit VIII



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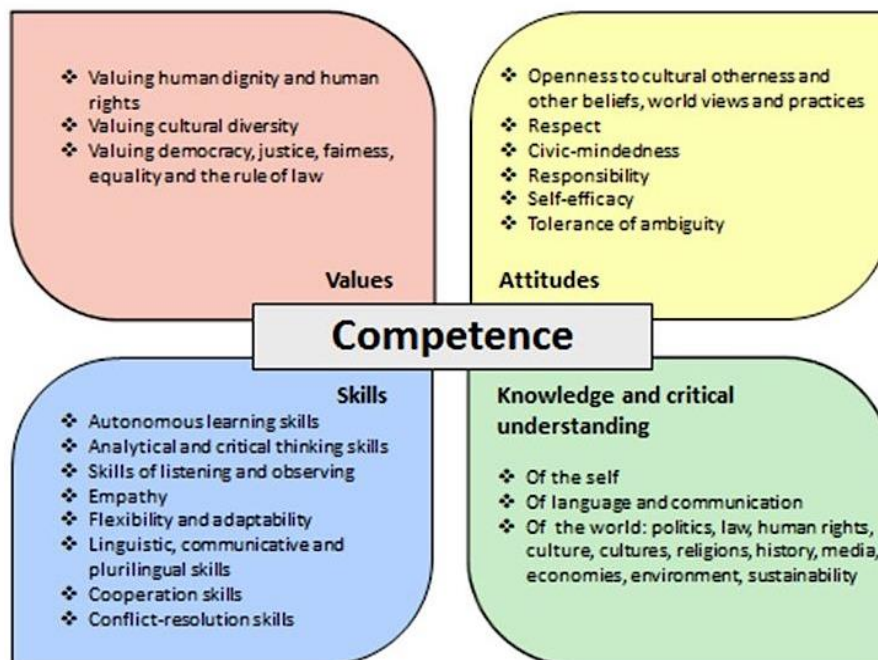
Introduction

Over the last decade global citizenship competences for young people have been identified in several logical frameworks by national and international institutions, with the aim to focus the attention of educational providers towards the challenges and the opportunities of democratic participation and employability.

SORAPS learning modules are addressed to teachers and educators for their key role in shaping new citizens in terms of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding.

For this reason, it can be useful to adopt as a reference the competence framework published by the Council of Europe in 2018 [*“Competences for democratic culture – Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies”*](#).¹

This conceptual model sums up the competences that citizens require to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, as shown in the graphic below.



This document offers a selection of the learning outcomes descriptors proposed by the Competences for Democratic Culture model to identify the competences that students attending the class activities proposed in the online course should acquire.

It can be used, also, as a reference to design further class activities to explore citizenship education and intercultural learning through religious studies in schools.

¹<https://rm.coe.int/16806ccc07>

VALUES

Valuing human dignity and human rights

Human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible and apply to everyone without distinction:

1. recognition that all people share a common humanity and have equal dignity irrespective of their particular cultural affiliations, status, abilities or circumstances;
2. recognition of the universal, inalienable and indivisible nature of human rights;
3. recognition that human rights should always be promoted, respected and protected;
4. recognition that fundamental freedoms should always be defended unless they undermine or violate the human rights of others;
5. recognition that human rights provide the foundation for living together as equals in society and for freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Valuing cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is an asset for society and should be promoted encouraging young people to move out from their comfort zones to learn from each other:

1. recognition that cultural diversity and pluralism of opinions, world views and practices are an asset for society and provide an opportunity for the enrichment of all members of society;
2. recognition that all people have the right to be different and the right to choose their own perspectives, views, beliefs and opinions;
3. recognition that people should always respect the perspectives, views, beliefs and opinions of other people, unless these are directed at undermining the human rights and freedoms of others;
4. recognition that people should always respect the lifestyles and practices of other people, unless they undermine or violate the human rights and freedoms of others;
5. recognition that people should listen to and engage in dialogue with those who are perceived to be different from themselves.

Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

All citizens ought to be able to participate equally in society and minorities should be treated justly, fairly, impartially and equally in accordance with the law:

1. recognition of the importance of active citizenship (while recognising that non-participation may sometimes be justified for reasons of conscience or circumstance);
2. recognition of the importance of citizen engagement with political decision making;
3. recognition of the need for the protection of civil liberties, including the civil liberties of people who hold minority views;
4. support for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes;
5. a sense of social justice and social responsibility for the just and fair treatment of all members of society, including equal opportunities for all irrespective of national

origins, ethnicity, race, religion, language, age, sex, gender, political opinion, birth, social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation or other status;

ATTITUDES

Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices

Openness involves:

1. sensitivity towards cultural diversity and to world views, beliefs, values and practices which differ from one's own;
2. curiosity about, and interest in discovering and learning about, other cultural orientations and affiliations and other world views, beliefs, values and practices;
3. willingness to suspend judgment and disbelief of other people's world views, beliefs, values and practices, and willingness to question the "naturalness" of one's own world view, beliefs, values and practices;
4. emotional readiness to relate to others who are perceived to be different from oneself;
5. willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage, co-operate and interact with those who are perceived to have cultural affiliations that differ from one's own, in a relationship of equality.

Respect

It recognises the importance of valuing different cultures and beliefs as equal in dignity and it involves:

1. positive regard and esteem for someone or something based on the judgment that they/it have intrinsic importance, worth or value;
2. positive regard and esteem for other people as equal human beings who share a common dignity and have exactly the same set of human rights and freedoms irrespective of their particular cultural affiliations, beliefs, opinions, lifestyles or practices;
3. positive regard and esteem for the beliefs, opinions, lifestyles and practices adopted by other people, as long as these do not undermine or violate the dignity, human rights or freedoms of others.

Civic-mindedness

It refers to the attitude towards different cultural and social groups and it involves:

1. a feeling of belonging to and identifying with the community;
2. mindfulness of other people in the community, of the interconnectedness between those people, and of the effects of one's actions on those people;
3. a sense of solidarity with other people in the community, including a willingness to co-operate and work with them, feelings of concern and care for their rights and welfare, and a willingness to defend those who might be disempowered and disadvantaged within the community;

Responsibility

It is the moral responsibility of the actions citizens perform and it refers to:

1. the adoption of a reflective and thoughtful approach towards one's actions and the possible consequences of those actions;
2. the identification of one's duties and obligations and how one ought to act in relation to a particular situation, based on a value or set of values;
3. making decisions about the actions to take (which in some cases might entail not taking action), given the circumstances which apply;
4. willingness to hold oneself accountable for the nature or consequences of one's decisions and actions;

Self-efficacy

It implies that individuals believe in themselves in terms of:

1. belief in one's ability to understand issues, to make judgments and to select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks;
2. a feeling of confidence about democratic engagement and undertaking the actions judged to be necessary to achieve democratic goals (including challenging and holding to account those in positions of power and authority when their decisions or actions are judged to be unfair or unjust);
3. a feeling of confidence about engaging in intercultural dialogue with those who are perceived to have cultural affiliations that differ from one's own.

Tolerance of ambiguity

It is the attitude to trust that other people's perspective can be as valuable as yours, even if it is not part of your own way of thinking. It refers to:

1. recognition and acknowledgement that there can be multiple perspectives and interpretations of any given situation or issue;
2. recognition and acknowledgement that one's own perspective on a situation may not be any better than other people's perspectives;
3. acceptance of complexity, contradictions and lack of clarity;
4. willingness to undertake tasks when only incomplete or partial information is available;
5. willingness to tolerate uncertainty and to deal with it constructively.

SKILLS

Autonomous learning skills

They imply the ability to select, organise and evaluate learning without external support, in terms of:

1. identifying one's own learning needs – these needs may stem from gaps in knowledge or understanding, from lack or poor mastery of skills, or from difficulties that have arisen as a consequence of current attitudes or values;
2. identifying, locating and accessing possible sources of the information, advice or guidance which is required to address these needs – these sources could include personal experiences, interactions and discussions with others, encounters with people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own or who hold different beliefs, opinions or world views from one's own, and visual, print, broadcast and digital media sources;
3. judging the reliability of the various sources of information, advice or guidance, assessing them for possible bias or distortion, and selecting the most suitable sources from the range available;

Analytical and critical thinking skills

Analytical and critical thinking skills consist of a large and complex cluster of interrelated skills. They include abilities or skills in:

1. systematically breaking down the materials that are under analysis into constituent elements, and organising those elements in a logical manner; identifying and interpreting the meaning(s) of each element, possibly by comparing and relating those elements to what is already known and identifying similarities and differences;
2. examining the elements in relationship to each other and identifying the connections that exist between them (logical, causal, temporal, etc.);
3. engaging not only with the literal meaning of materials, but also with their broader rhetorical purpose including the underlying motives, intentions and agendas of those who produced or created them (in the case of political communications, this includes the ability to identify propaganda and the ability to deconstruct the underlying motives, intentions and purposes of those who have produced the propaganda);
4. situating the materials within the historical context in which they have been produced in order to assist in making evaluative judgments about the materials;

Skills of listening and observing

Active listening, body language, facial expressions, play an important role in the communication process. The challenge is to decode those messages across cultural differences. Therefore, it implies:

1. attending to the relationship between what is being said and the social context in which it is said;
2. paying close attention to the behaviour of other people and retaining information about that behaviour, particularly the behaviour of others who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own;

3. paying close attention to the similarities and the differences in how people react to the same situation, particularly people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one another.

Empathy

'To put oneself into other people's shoes' is a quite popular way of saying across cultures. Empathy in this case refers to the ability to understand thoughts, emotions and feelings across cultures and beliefs. It implies:

1. cognitive perspective-taking – the ability to apprehend and understand the perceptions, thoughts and beliefs of other people;
2. affective perspective-taking – the ability to apprehend and understand the emotions, feelings and needs of other people;
3. sympathy, sometimes called "compassionate empathy" or "empathic concern" – the ability to experience feelings of compassion and concern for other people based on the apprehension of their cognitive or affective state or condition, or their material situation or circumstances.

Flexibility and adaptability

It means to adjust thoughts, ideas and cultural stereotypes in relation to new social contexts.

It implies:

1. adjusting one's habitual way of thinking due to changing circumstances, or temporarily shifting into a different cognitive perspective in response to cultural cues;
2. overcoming anxieties, worries and insecurities about meeting and interacting with other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own;
3. regulating and reducing negative feelings towards members of another group with which one's own group has historically been in conflict;

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

Among the many descriptors, the most relevant refer to:

1. the ability to communicate clearly in a range of situations – this includes expressing one's beliefs, opinions, interests and needs, explaining and clarifying ideas, advocating, promoting, arguing, reasoning, discussing, debating, persuading and negotiating;
2. the ability to recognise the different forms of expression and the different communicative conventions (both verbal and non-verbal) in the communications employed by other social groups and their cultures;

Co-operation skills

When it comes to inter-faith dialogue the following descriptors are particularly relevant:

1. expressing views and opinions in group settings, and encouraging other group members to express their views and opinions in such settings;

2. building consensus and compromise within a group;
3. taking action together with others in a reciprocal and co-ordinated manner;

Conflict resolution skills

To promote peaceful cooperation among different cultures these descriptors can be more relevant:

1. reducing or preventing aggression and negativity, and creating a neutral environment in which people feel free to express their differing opinions and concerns without fear of reprisal;
2. encouraging and enhancing receptivity, mutual understanding and trust between conflicting parties;

KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

Self-awareness is vital in order to live in a culture of democracy, in terms of:

1. knowledge and understanding of one's own cultural affiliations;
2. knowledge and understanding of one's perspective on the world and of its cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects and biases;
3. knowledge and understanding of the assumptions and preconceptions which underlie one's perspective on the world;
4. understanding how one's perspective on the world, and one's assumptions and preconceptions, are contingent and dependent upon one's cultural affiliations and experiences, and in turn affect one's perceptions, judgments and reactions to other people;
5. awareness of one's own emotions, feelings and motivations, especially in contexts involving communication and co-operation with other people;
6. knowledge and understanding of the limits of one's own competence and expertise.

Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

For the purposes of SORAPS the relevant descriptors are:

1. understanding how the use of language is a cultural practice which operates as a carrier of information, meanings and identities which circulate in the culture in which that language is embedded;
2. understanding how one's own assumptions, preconceptions, perceptions, beliefs and judgments are related to the specific language(s) which one speaks.

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (including politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment and sustainability)

1. knowledge and understanding of political and legal concepts, including democracy, freedom, justice, equality, citizenship, rights and responsibilities, the necessity of laws and regulations, and the rule of law;
2. knowledge and understanding that human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible, and that everyone does not only have human rights but also a responsibility to respect the rights of others, irrespective of their national origins, ethnicity, race, religion, language, age, sex, gender, political opinion, birth, social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation or other status;
3. knowledge and understanding of how people's cultural affiliations shape their world views, preconceptions, perceptions, beliefs, values, behaviours and interactions with others;
4. knowledge and understanding that all cultural groups are internally variable and heterogeneous, do not have fixed inherent characteristics, contain individuals who contest and challenge traditional cultural meanings, and are constantly evolving and changing;
5. understanding power relations, political disagreement and conflict of opinion in democratic societies, and how such disagreements and conflicts can be peacefully resolved;
6. knowledge and understanding of contemporary threats to democracy;

Knowledge and critical understanding of religions, which includes:

1. knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of the history of particular religious traditions, of the key texts and key doctrines of particular religious traditions, and of the commonalities and differences which exist between different religious traditions;
2. knowledge and understanding of religious symbols, religious rituals and the religious uses of language;
3. knowledge and understanding of the key features of the beliefs, values, practices and experiences of individuals who practise particular religions;
4. understanding of the fact that the subjective experience and personal expressions of religions are likely to differ in various ways from the standard textbook representations of those religions;
5. knowledge and understanding of the internal diversity of beliefs and practices which exists within individual religions;
6. knowledge and understanding of the fact that all religious groups contain individuals who contest and challenge traditional religious meanings, and that religious groups do not have fixed inherent characteristics, but are constantly evolving and changing.