Matti Rautiainen (ed.)

TOWARDS A BETTER DEMOCRACY

Council of Europe's Competences for Democratic Culture in Education and Teaching

CONTENTS

TO THE READER

Democracy is a matter of us all. In building it, everyone has a role to play. In these words, we could encapsulate the foundations of a democratic society, the objective of education, where a child grows into an active, democratic citizen. The actions of such a citizen are based not only on the values of democracy but also on the will, skills and knowledge to be involved in developing it. Furthermore, democracy is never ready, but we need to cherish it, talk about it and build it all the time – day after day, month after month and year after year. Without us cherishing it, dark clouds will begin to gather above democracy, containing such things as hate, contempt for human dignity and false news.

All together, that is the key idea of democracy. On our own behalf, we can ask ourselves whether we are doing things together? If we are not, a democratic way of life is not part of our daily life. If we are, we should continue to develop our actions by means of critical analysis and through different perspectives, without forgetting to feel satisfaction for what we have accomplished. This process means providing for increasingly stronger involvement of learners in the building of communal life in a radical, fundamental manner, all the way from early childhood education to higher education. It may be radical to the extent that it puts our understanding of our education system, considered to be equal, to test. If pupils and students were really allowed to join in the development of education, as equal operators, what would that mean? Would it be worth testing? My personal answer is a resounding yes. The concern for the state of the world alone necessitates that we discuss what would be a more sustainable way of life and take action for such a way of life at all levels of society and in all communities – all together.

The 20 competences of democratic culture defined by the Council of Europe serve as the background for this publication. They provide a framework that helps us to understand each other better not only as individuals but, first and foremost, as communities. This framework gives us a mirror that enables us to examine our own operations. At the same time, it gives us a model with the help of and relying on which we can develop our own actions. Competences are like a cooking pot: when we drop the contents of

our education into the pot, they are equipped with a democratic angle and, all combined, they form the foundations of a democratic way of life. The Council of Europe published its 20 competences of democratic culture in 2016, and presently the process is in a stage where knowledge of the competences for democratic culture are being disseminated in the member states. This dissemination work is practised by the Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN), founded in 2018, where Finland is represented by Counsellor of Education Kristina Kaihari from the Finnish National Agency for Education and Matti Rautiainen from the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Jyväskylä as her deputy. The representatives were appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

This publication studies the competences for democratic culture from various perspectives. The first part of the publication briefly describes the competences and how they have emerged. The brief introduction is based on the summary of publications concerning the competences for democracy, which have also been presented in the work *Rakentavaa vuorovaikutusta. Opas demokraattisen osallisuuden vahvistamiseen, vihapuheen ja väkivaltaisen radikalismin ennaltaehkäisyyn* (in Finnish; Constructive interaction. A guide for the strengthening of democratic participation and the prevention of hate speech and violent radicalism) (ed. Satu Elo, Kristina Kaihari, Paula Mattila and Leena Nissilä, Finnish National Agency for Education 2017). In the first articles of the book, Olli-Pekka Moisio and Tuukka Tomperi examine the nature, difficulty and possibility of democracy. After this, Perttu Männistö examines the challenge posed by the competence for democracy in the context of basic education. Matti Rautiainen uses the Finnish teacher education as his point of reflection.

The rest of the articles in the book were created after a seminar on involvement organised by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The seminar, held at the beginning of September 2018, examined the question of involvement in education and promoting it in relation to competences for democracy from early childhood education to upper secondary education. In their articles, the authors outline these thinking processes to help people involved in education at different stages, from early childhood education to upper secondary education, to create stronger democratic education in their own operating environments. Some descriptions of already developed and functioning practices were also included in the publication.

This book is primarily intended for educators and teachers. The book is accompanied by a video (YouTube: Kohti parempaa demokratiaa) targeted particularly to students at various levels of education. On the video, experts from different fields and socially active operators highlight the contents of different competences and their relation to democracy. At the beginning of the video, there is also a brief introduction to democracy and, towards the end, some questions that communities can use to reflect on their own activities and how to develop them. Everyone is free to use the video as they wish. It is suited for viewing during class in its entirety or in parts, for independent study or for general enjoyment as 'a lesson in democracy'.

I want to extend my thanks to everyone involved in the ideation and writing of the book. Special thanks for co-operation to Kristina Kaihari from the Finnish National Agency for Education and Kati Anttalainen from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The publication of this work was supported by the Council of Europe.
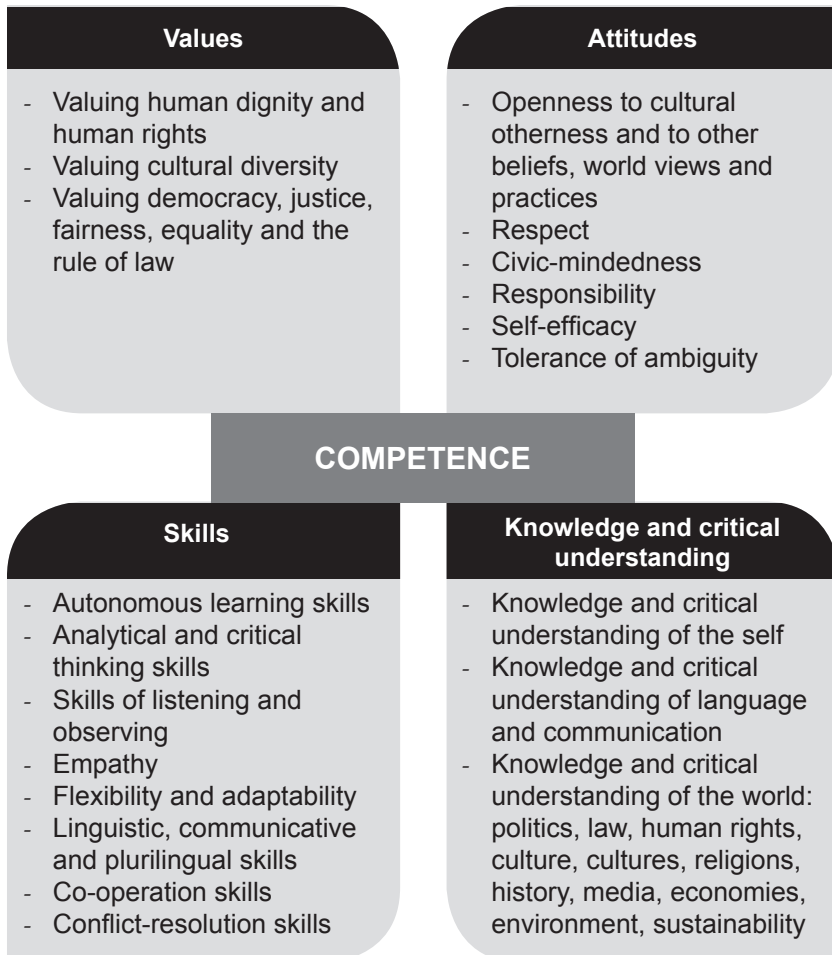
What are we talking about when we talk about competences for democracy?

What does democracy mean? What about competences? By its operations, the Council of Europe, established in 1949, strives to advance human rights and democracy, and their realisation in the member states. A total of 47 European states are members of the Council. In 2016, the Council published *Competences for democratic culture – Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies* (published in summary in Finnish *Demokratiakulttuurin edellyttämä osaaminen. Eläminen yhdessä tasavertaisina monikulttuurisissa demokraattisissa yhteiskunnissa*). Both are openly available as online publications. The basic idea of the competences for democratic culture is to provide individuals and different communities with a framework, a model, for developing their own operations towards an increasingly democratic way of life together with other actors. It has a special role in education and teaching, as it aspires to strengthen the commitment of those being educated to the democratic way of life by creating growth environments where democracy can be realised.

To get more acquainted with the starting points behind the competences, please read the publications mentioned above. On the next page, the description of the competences is shown in summary in the form of a table,

where the competences have been divided into values, attitudes, knowledge and critical understanding. In the model described, the combination of them all is called the democratic culture. In translations into Finnish, the term often used for 'competence' is 'osaamisalue', which can be used in the context of democratic competences as well. The table is followed by short descriptions of each of the competences. The articles in this book discuss the relationship between these competences at various levels of education.

The 20 competences for democratic culture

Values

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

Attitudes

- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity

COMPETENCE

Skills

- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

Knowledge and critical understanding

- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

An overview of competence factors vital for participating effectively and appropriately in a culture of democracy

Valuing human dignity and human rights

> This value is based on the general belief that every human being is of equal worth, has equal dignity, is entitled to equal respect, and is entitled to the same set of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and ought to be treated accordingly.

Valuing cultural diversity

> This value is based on the general belief that other cultural affiliations, cultural variability and diversity, and pluralism of perspectives, views and practices ought to be positively regarded, appreciated and cherished.

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

> This set of values is based on the general belief that societies ought to operate and be governed through democratic processes which respect the principles of justice, fairness and equality and the rule of law.

Attitudes

Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices

> Openness is an attitude towards people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself or towards beliefs, world views and practices that differ from one's own. It involves sensitivity towards, curiosity about and willingness to engage with other people and other perspectives on the world.

Respect

> Respect consists of positive regard and esteem for someone or something based on the judgement that they have intrinsic importance, worth or value. Having respect for other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations or different beliefs, opinions or practices from one's own is vital for effective intercultural dialogue and a culture of democracy.

Civic-mindedness

Civic-mindedness is an attitude towards a community or a social group to which one belongs that is larger than one's immediate circle of family and friends. It involves a sense of belonging to that community, an awareness of other people in the community, an awareness of the effects of one's actions on those people, solidarity with other members of the community and a sense of civic duty towards the community.

Responsibility

Moral responsibility is an attitude towards one's own actions. It involves being reflective about one's actions, forming intentions about how to act in a morally appropriate way, conscientiously performing those actions and holding oneself accountable for the outcomes of those actions.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is an attitude towards the self. It involves a positive belief in one's own ability to undertake the actions that are required to achieve particular goals, and confidence that one can understand issues, select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks, navigate obstacles successfully and make a difference in the world.

Tolerance of ambiguity

Tolerance of ambiguity is an attitude towards situations which are uncertain and subject to multiple conflicting interpretations. It involves evaluating these kinds of situations positively and dealing with them constructively.

Skills

Autonomous learning skills

Autonomous learning skills are the skills required to pursue, organise and evaluate one's own learning in accordance with one's own needs, in a self-directed manner, without being prompted by others.

Analytical and critical thinking skills

Analytical thinking skills are the skills required to analyse, evaluate and make judgements about materials of any kind (e.g. texts, arguments, interpretations, issues, events, experiences, etc.) in a systematic and logical manner.

Skills of listening and observing

Skills of listening and observing are the skills required to notice and understand what is being said and how it is being said, and to notice and understand other people's non-verbal behaviour.

Empathy

Empathy is the set of skills required to understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and to see the world from other people's perspectives.

Flexibility and adaptability

Flexibility and adaptability are the skills required to adjust and regulate one's thoughts, feelings or behaviours in such a manner that one can respond effectively and appropriately to new contexts and situations.

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills are the skills required to communicate effectively and appropriately with people who speak the same or another language, and to act as a mediator between speakers of different languages.

Co-operation skills

Co-operation skills are the skills required to participate successfully with others in shared activities, tasks and ventures and to encourage others to co-operate so that group goals may be achieved.

Conflict-resolution skills

Conflict-resolution skills are the skills required to address, manage and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way by guiding conflicting parties towards optimal solutions that are acceptable to all parties.

Knowledge and critical understanding

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

This includes knowledge and critical understanding of one's own thoughts, beliefs, feelings and motivations, and of one's cultural affiliations and perspective on the world.

Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

This includes knowledge and critical understanding of the socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions that operate in the language(s) which one speaks, of the effects that different communication styles can have on other people, and of how every language expresses culturally shared meanings in a unique way.

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

This includes a large and complex body of knowledge and critical understanding in a variety of areas including politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment and sustainability.

Olli-Pekka Moisio[1]

PROPER FOUNDATIONS OR ONES WITH CASTING DEFECTS? DEMOCRACY PUT TO TEST

Democracy in crisis...

Walter Lippmann published the book *Public Opinion* in 1922. In his book, Lippmann poses a clear question that remains valid today: can citizens collect basic information on public affairs and end up making well-considered decisions based on this data? Lippmann's answer to this question of vital interest for democracy is negative. In his book, he reveals a yawning gap that opens up between our concept of democracy and our knowledge of how people act.

Most of the 20th century democracy theorists believed that increasing the amount of information would produce better-informed citizenship and better-informed citizens would realise the fundamental promise of democracy of a better, equal and fair society. Looking at the world, past and present, one must conclude that it would rather seem that these thinkers had it wrong. Lippmann came to the same conclusion. Increasing the amount of knowledge and information does not necessarily lead to informed civic participation. One can equally claim that it will lead to increasing amount of noise, learned ignorance and cliquism. On both extremes – whether ignorant or well informed – people seem to become increasingly siloed when it comes to public affairs.

The solution Lippmann suggests in his book is a kind of "bureaucracy of experts" that would produce just the right amount of information, suitably rationed and pre-digested for the citizens, to support sufficient rational consideration. In my opinion, Lippmann's solution to the situation is tempting, but ultimately wrong. He ends up eroding the fundamental prerequisites of democracy while trying to rescue it. Lippmann did not seem to make enough effort to seek instruments for steering the public opinion in an intelligent manner. Instead, he ended up transcending it by creating a system that would decide matters on behalf of the citizens. The tempting solution suggested by Lippmann has recently emerged in the United

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1   Olli-Pekka Moisio, University Lecturer, Department of Social
    Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä

States in particular, both among conservatives and democrats. In this time of social media storms, false news and post-truth era in politics, his book has become topical again.

The new forms of social media and information have created a situation, where democracy is considered to be in a deep crisis. The situation has even been referred to as the death of democracy. This, however, would be jumping to conclusions, since in the course of history democracy has survived far more challenging circumstances than the present ones. Democracy has lived in the shadows of totalitarianisms, perhaps in hibernation, but it has never died. In this context, we could examine the question of the resilience of democracy. Even when the situation in many visible seats of political power is going in the wrong direction with a view to democracy, it would still seem that, at the same time, there are parallel processes running that produce increasing amounts of more equal and fair opportunities for people to participate and remain informed about the state of the world. Perhaps the most significant of these parallel processes is the exponential spread of technologies related to dissemination of information to almost everywhere in the world. At the same time, however, this technology-driven information revolution is accompanied by the problem described by Lippmann. People are increasingly informed about the world, but, at the same time, populism and plainly mistaken image of the world are gaining more and more foothold.

... and the missing truth?

If Lippmann is right, increasing the quantity and quality of information will not save us, because the problem is not about the access to the facts, but in our ability to process the constantly increasing amount of information. Therefore, the solution would seem to lie in the cultivation of our information processing skills. However, it may not be humanly possible to increase that particular capacity.

In his book, Lippmann focuses on the central role of the press in steering and forming of public opinion. Today, the established press is competing with numerous alternative web-based magazines and information channels. Lippmann saw the press like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, jumping from one topic to another and bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision, without being able to fully

explain them: "The function of news is to signalize an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them in relation with each other and make a picture of reality, and make a picture of reality on which men can act" (Curtis 1989, xviii).

Societal matters are, of course, challenging to any channel of information. If the report is about sports results or elections results, its objectivity is relatively easy to assess. But as soon as we shift the focus to, say, assessment of economic circumstances or, for example, the development of the health-care system or the need of social control, we need to resort to interpretations of quite complex weak signals. In the latter cases, it would seem that there is no test that would guarantee objectivity. This is exactly the space the alternative media adhered to. Its foundations lie in the very fact that, ultimately, all journalists are often forced to make narratives of the world based on their own biased thinking, experiences, hopes, ignorance and fears.

This short text does not allow examining this argument in any closer detail. The problem is made even worse not only by the problem related to how the truth is presented, but also by the problematic questions related to funding of the operations. In their operations, both the mainstream media and the alternative media challenging it must take account of the wishes and needs of the advertisers and consumers. This societal reality that forms the foundations of their operations is leading to extreme fragmentation of the production and dissemination of information. People consume news as they do any daily consumer goods, and their focus shifts to the information that best corresponds with their preconceived idea of the nature of things.

The prevailing situation would seem to erode the emphasis laid on the role of free press in the theories of democracy. According to such a theory, the role of the press is to act as a watchdog of power and to present the truth, thus bearing the weight of publicity on its shoulders. In today's world, however, it is justified to ask whether most people are even interested in hearing the truth. The internet is full of own communities for all kinds of absurdities, and such communities are no minor whims, as they may have hundreds of thousands of members[2]. Quite aptly, Lippmann points out in his book that people typically prefer the curious trivial over the dull important. They are guided by flattery and convenience rather than honesty and challenging content.

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2   See, for example, The Flat Earth Society. https://theflatearthsociety.org/home/.

It is perplexing to look at today's world and read a book written a hundred years ago. Lippmann's analysis hits the target in many respects, and his pessimism is justified. The truth keeps varying, and people's trust in the press has hit the rock-bottom of all time[3]. The stereotypic thinking highlighted by Lippmann has gained increasing strength as a result of, for example, social media echo chambers and the emergence of the alternative media. Populist social movements are powered by the people, and they are affecting international politics. People's impressions of the world produce intellectual slums, which are increasingly difficult to shed due to the new technologies as a result of, for instance, search engine optimization.

In such a situation, Lippmann called for a "specialized class" of social science experts who would operate beyond the voters and the politicians. In theory, there would be a group of experts available for every administrative sector, who would analyse the facts and, after the analysis, give their advice to the representatives of administration. Lippmann believed such a system would divorce the "assembling of knowledge" from "the control of policy". At the same time, it would ensure that the experts remained independently funded and thus free from corrupt motives.

John Dewey and the possibility of democracy

After Public Opinion was released, Lippmann and Dewey entered into a long, personal debate about how to fix democracy. Dewey approved Lippmann's situation analysis but considered the solution suggested by him wrong. Dewey (1984, 343-344) writes that, as Lippman describes "every issue is hopelessly entangled in a snarl of emotions, stereotypes and irrelevant memories and associations". Bureaucracy of experts would liberate the public from these oppressive fictions, but at the expense of the foundations of democracy. As Dewey (1993, 187) put it: "No government by experts in which the masses do not have the chance to inform the experts as to their needs can be anything but an oligarchy managed in the interests of the few".

For Dewey, everything could be reduced to a simple question: who is most in need of enlightenment, citizens or administrators? What Lippmann wanted, whether he realized it or not, was to permanently turn citizens into spectators. He assumed that public opinion was about the mass of individuals possessing a correct representation of the world, and since

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3   For the situation in the United States, see, i.a.,
     https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-trust-media-and-democracy.

they could never do this, they had to be locked out of the centre of political decision-making process.

But Dewey insisted that, in a democracy, political knowledge could only come about through conversation among and between citizens. That was the only way of producing political knowledge. The only reality that mattered here was the reality that citizens collectively construct. If the public were atomized and permanently cut off from the conversation about public affairs, then you would have undercut the very possibility of democracy.

Lippmann and Dewey portray the severity of the issue. Lippmann is right in his situation analysis, whereas Dewey is right about what are the foundations of the possibility of democracy. When we add to the equation the argument Robert D. Putnam presented in his famous book *Bowling Alone*, released in 2000, we are in a situation that seems insurmountable. Putnam analyses the decline of the social capital in the United States based on several indicators. Perhaps the most amazing finding he made was related to the dwindling number of members in traditional civic, social and leisure-time organisations (in his book, bowling associations). This dramatic drop in the membership of civic and social associations has taken place at the same time as the number of people bowling has exploded. The social bonds are weakening, political debate is turning into nationalistic one and animosities are beginning to rise again.

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Mulla ois tässä vertaisarvioitu tutkimus...

Tuukka Tomperi[4]

THE SKILLS AND DISPOSITIONS OF DEMOCRATIC DEBATE AND CRITICAL THINKING

In its most narrow meaning, 'democracy' may refer to a form of government or political system, where citizens have been guaranteed – by constitution for example – an opportunity to elect their own representatives to make decisions on the governance of a state or a community. However, most of the theorists of democracy set many other requirements for democracy as well, and even the narrowest theories of democracy acknowledge that *a well-functioning* democracy needs a much wider and robust foundations than the minimum requirement above.

In western countries, democratic institutions seem firmly established, but trust in institutions is deceptive if the democratic attitudes and skills are not rooted in the civic society. A few decades ago, we might have believed that the triumph of liberal democracies is inevitable and that representative systems will function of their own accord. Today, the world looks very different.

The rapid change of the media has made the social debate fragmented. On online forums, unjustified opinions and fanaticism are seemingly on the same line with argumentative debate respectful of others. Both scientific knowledge and unfounded prejudices as well as intentional deceptions are readily available to anyone. At the same time, the appreciation of scientific research and trust in its social effectiveness are faltering. The social media has been observed to feed echo chambers and confirmation bias. By using the data collected from the users, the algorithms of digital applications tend to limit the world view instead of expanding it or exposing people to something new.

The social environment may strengthen both the good and the bad human characteristics, and this most clearly applies to our present-day world of media. For example, at first, the internet and the digital communications technology raised immense optimism as "information superhighway" and "connectors of people". On the other hand, they have also brought the humankind into an era we now call "the post-truth times" and where heated debates accompanied by hate speech have become an everyday occurrence.

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4   Tuukka Tomperi, Researcher (Kone Foundation), Faculty of Education, University of Tampere.

The introduction of increasingly efficient communications instruments did not automatically produce more intelligent public debate.

This has been a graphic reminder of how the competences maintaining a democratic culture and way of life do not develop by themselves. Good thinking and good debating skills must be supported and learned – and taught – deliberately. When this is done, we, once again, get to see that individual thinking and common dialogue are reciprocally connected.

Democratic deliberation requires critical thinking

Dialogic and 'deliberative' democracy – or the model of democracy emphasising wide multilateral public deliberation – is fundamentally dependent on the citizens' competence to participate in argumentative communication. (Alhanen 2016; Gutmann & Thompson 1996.) The striving for common deliberation and decision-making is a demanding project in the implementation of which emphasising "everyone's right to personal opinion" will not suffice. The opinions may be unjustified, incomprehensible to others, based on incorrect information and destructive of the dialogic connection.

A democratic debate requires more than that. For example, one needs to have answers to key information-based questions or at least criteria for how to seek information-based solutions and answers. For the comparison and weighing of controversial conceptions of value, one needs tolerant and peaceful practices and the ability to engage in respectful debate beyond value conflicts. Some generally acknowledged standards of good argumentation are needed for a debate to go forward. And, generally speaking, to provide starting points for a democratic debate, it requires good will to understand others and the readiness to admit one's own mistakes, if necessary.

When growing up as part of their own community, people adopt different practices, attitudes and expectations. This is called socialisation and some of it happens automatically. The features that characterise each era and society are imprinted on our minds without us even noticing. For example, in our own era, nationalism and capitalism are the basic settings of our world view into which we are socialised semiautomatically. At the same time, they bring with them many other elements we have not consciously weighed and included as part of our thinking: division between us and the others, the fear of anything foreign and unfamiliar, the myths of

unity, competition between individuals, idealization of success and fear of failure, measuring of the human value using economic criteria or benefits they produce – and so on.

Even our biopsychological properties prepare the ground for many moral and political intuitions that we adopt in the socialisation process. Spontaneous emotional responses and our intuition often guide the way we operate more than rational thinking and knowledge. As individuals, people are quite deficient in processing of data. They are easy to mislead, since the intuitions and heuristics that are an organic part of their own thinking are enough to make their minds stray easily. (Tomperi 2017b.) Many of these innate biopsychological properties and features of socialisation work against democratic attitudes. In addition to making individual rational decision-making difficult, they also impede common deliberation based on reasoning.

Therefore, the competences for democracy are not learned spontaneously. In the process, critical-reflective thinking must function as a central instrument, a kind of intervention, with the help of which we acknowledge our own ways of thinking and acting and are ready to change them. The challenge of democracy education has always been finding ways by which obstacles to the establishment of competences for democracy could be overcome or dismantled. It does not happen by disseminating information alone (even though that is needed as well). The essential thing is to gain practical experience of how intelligent, listening and argumentative dialogue and debate works. Common consideration, democratic 'deliberation', is the same as public reasoning which needs to be learned through practice.

Critical thinking requires democratic deliberation

In Plato's *Theaitetos* dialogue, Socrates already defines thinking as "soul's silent dialogue with itself ". (Plato, *Theaitetos* 189e.) Language and dialogue are learned from other people, and with language we gradually learn conceptual, or abstract, thinking. The modern educational and learning psychology confirms the conception that reasoning is specifically learned by practicing the use of reason in social interaction with others.

The educational psychologist Lev Vygotski, who has greatly influenced the current conception of learning, underscored that all the higher cognitive functions originate as a result of concrete interactions between individ-

uals. When growing up as part of a human community, a child internalises forms of social interaction and communication and applies them to her or his personal psychological use. The higher thinking skills of an individual originate within a human community from mutual communication representing skilful thinking. (Vygotski 1982.) Applying this conception, we can also propose that higher-level rational thinking develops when we receive models, encouragement and support for it from our social environment. The key to this are the *shared practices* of good thinking. (Cam 2019; Lipman 2003; Tomperi & Juuso 2008; Tomperi 2017b.)

Skilful thinking has been divided into different dimensions in the form of, for example, critical, creative, constructive and caring thinking (Lipman 2003). All the dimensions are important, but in this package critical thinking provides kind of foundations on which the potential for independent thinking and intellectual self-defence can be built upon.

As a feature of skilful thinking, 'critical' does not refer to negativity or rejection (as it often does in everyday language). Here, critical refers to careful evaluation, rational consideration – in accordance with the etymology of the word (Greek *krinō*, 'I investigate', 'I decide'; *kritikos*, 'capable of judgement'). If necessary, critical thinkers understand to call to question the claims, distractions and world views presented to them. On the other hand, they do not make haste to pass judgement but refrain from jumping into conclusions or judgements. The time to take a stand comes only after the matter has been analysed and examined from different perspectives. Even in this case, every achieved view is fundamentally open and temporary. New information or better understanding may cause one to change one's thinking. Criticality is defined by 'fallibilism', awareness of the possibility that all claims to knowledge could be mistaken, and the readiness to test and correct adopted conceptions. Critical thinking is also always and primarily self-criticism. (Tomperi 2017b.)

Critical thinkers aim to make considered judgements, deliberately support them with criteria and justifications, take the contexts and semantic connections of the topic into account and are ready to correct their views (Lipman 2003). Skilful expression of critical thinking is public argumentation that does not outright reject counterarguments but understands them as a resource for developing one's own thinking. This kind of open and argumentative communication sounds natural but is far from easy.

Since the cognitive, emotional and social dimensions are closely intertwined in people's thinking and actions, as described above, one cannot practise the art of critical thinking simply by developing one's intelligence. In fact, many prerequisites of skilful thinking and debate are specifically socio-emotional abilities and dispositions: one listens to others and replies to them in an orderly and friendly manner even when in disagreement with them; one recognises and acknowledges aloud the merits in another person's thinking; one knows how to receive criticism against one's own ideas; one admits one's mistakes in front of others; one tolerates uncertainty and avoids making abrupt black-and-white statements; one can flexibly adjust one's own world view and outlook on the world in collaboration with others. These and many other abilities of a good thinker and debater require growth in self-understanding and in the management of one's own emotional reactions.

The socio-emotional abilities and dispositions of intelligence and emotions cannot be practised alone but they develop in the company of other people, when exposed to concrete situations where one opens one's own thinking to mutual sparring. It requires courage and collective trust. Online discussion forums seldom advance the growth of such trust. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that, during their school years, all children and young people get plenty of chances to practise argumentative debate and dialogue built on trust, and that they gain positive experiences of such discussions in a safe atmosphere. In the growth process, the practice of dialogic and democratic deliberation can offer a most necessary positive model for how to pursue critical thinking.

At its best, the practice of co-operative thinking is dialogue and debate that has personal meaning

In other words, critical thinking and democratic debating culture are closely linked and reciprocally strengthened. At the same time, they are linked to the topical key questions of a multicultural and pluralistic society, such as media literacy, intellectual self-defence, understanding of diversity, conciliation of interests, dialogue transcending cultural differences and the search for common ethical principles. One may notice that the fundamental elements of teaching thinking skills are at the very heart of democratic education:

- Getting accustomed to inquisitive, questioning and deliberative debating practices that respect the criteria of argumentation and practising them;
- Guidance to listening and respecting others and learning from them;
- Encouraging people to practise self-criticism;
- Supporting inclinations towards critical, creative, constructive and caring thinking;
- Encouraging people to openness towards new experiences, different people and diverse views;
- Gathering positive experiences of collective dialogue and debate situations.

The connection between democratic-deliberative debate and the skills of independent thinking are today well acknowledged in research. The psychological development of thinking skills is nowadays typically approached from the angle of linguistic interaction and social co-operation instead of an individualistic perspective. Several areas of research are interested in the dialogic debate and communication exercises that develop thinking and argumentation skills. (E.g. Preiss & Sternberg 2010; Resnick et al. 2015; Wegerif et al. 2015.)

The democratic debating culture is emphasised by, for example, the 'pedagogical philosophy' for children and young people, which has long traditions and widely spread applications as a pedagogic operation model. In this model, the learning and inquiring community – a class, teaching group, interest group – practises quality thinking by focusing on examining philosophical questions that interest the people involved. The community also always jointly reflects on how it operates itself: are we listening to one another, are we justifying our arguments, are we learning from each other, are we making progress in argumentative thinking. By modelling the prerequisites of democratic activity and the process of public consideration in the forms of deliberation and argumentation, the practice of philosophy strengthens the democratic skills and dispositions of the participants. (Lipman 2003; Tomperi & Juuso 2008; Tomperi 2017b.) "Love of wisdom" – as well as aspiring for such philosophical values and ideals as truth and justice – is also actually an excellent signpost for deliberative democracy.

Practising the skills of dialogue and debate in philosophical subjects brings content to such activity, preventing thinking from diminishing into a mere technical skill. The issues being addressed are sought from the spheres of life that are meaningful for the participants, and the debate advances to deep further questions concerning the content. When discussing the matters, one cannot avoid analysing fundamental epistemic, normative and existential concepts and phenomena – such as knowledge, truth, beauty, the good, power, existence and identity – in a reflective manner. As opposed to instrumental practice of thinking skills, philosophy can be called personally relevant thinking. (Tomperi & Juuso 2014; Tomperi 2017a.)

In philosophical questions, the personal relevance and meaningfulness (e.g. "how should I lead my life?") is shared, since the private causes of wonderment are at the same time shared and fundamental problems of human life in general. Personal interrogation proceeds to general themes ("what is good life?") and expands to concern the framework for living together with others ("what kind of a good society creates opportunities for striving for a good life?"). A philosophical inquiry does not need to lead to consensus, but it can still eliminate misunderstandings, sharpen argumentation and strengthen our ability to understand others and respect the diversity of our thinking. In this respect as well, philosophy is well suited for modelling a well-functioning democratic society, where disagreements and conflicts cannot be avoided, but where they can be debated in a peaceful manner respective of others.

Examining the questions of personally meaningful matters in the process of shared thinking is simultaneously a practice of both personal growth and collective progress, a form of personal and social cultivation. As John Dewey, known as the philosopher of democracy, so often reiterated, in the best possible democratic community this is not merely the business of school and education, but the ultimate goal of all institutions in society:

> *"Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society." (Dewey 1920, 186.)*

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Perttu Männistö[5]

THE COUNTRY OF UNUSED OPPORTUNITIES – DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCIES AND THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Democracy and the Finnish comprehensive school have been living in an interesting interaction with each other for the past decades. When studied in international scale, the basic principles of the Finnish comprehensive school are democratic. This notion is supported particularly by the local school principle applied to the Finnish comprehensive school. In other words, Finnish pupils go to the school that is regionally closest to them, for this reason, each class consists of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds. Even though the matter has not been studied much over the years – perhaps, because the phenomenon has been seen as self-evident – the Finnish comprehensive school system has certainly played a role in building the basic feeling of trust in the Finnish society.

The local school principle, the autonomous status of teachers and a widely adopted teaching model based on dialogue have placed Finland in the vanguard position when discussing the topic of democracy education (see e.g. Finnish National Board of Education, 2011). However, even though, in theory, the comprehensive school in Finland is based on democratic ideas, research has failed to show that schools would be implementing education where democracy functions as a cross-cutting feature. Therefore, we can conclude that the observations on the passive relationship of Finnish young people to society highlighted by Suutarinen (2002) at the latest put the spotlight on the factors related to democracy education in the Finnish basic education. The study on the societal relations of Finnish teachers conducted by Syrjäläinen, Värri and Eronen (2006) followed along the same lines. Their observations supported the assumption on the Finnish basic education that had been heard before: teachers still seem to have a strong connection to the traditional image of teachers, at the core of which lie a passive relationship to society, politics and civic participation, and insufficient knowledge and skills to teach active democratic agency. Likewise, even though, in theory, teachers have the autonomy to implement the kind of teaching they find fit, in reality, teachers hardly ever use

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5   Perttu Männistö, Doctoral Student, Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä.

this opportunity. (Fornaciari & Männistö 2017; Finnish National Board of Education 2011, 52; Syrjäläinen et al. 2006.)

What then do the above-mentioned factors mean for the readiness of the Finnish comprehensive school to educate citizens who have and who understand pan-European competences for democracy? It is difficult to give a direct answer to the question, but in this brief text I strive to clarify the current situation from the following perspective: The Finnish basic education has a vast potential for preparing democratically thinking, operating and competent citizens, but there are significant problems in the public education system the solution of which is of paramount importance with a view to achieving the goal. In the light of studies, currently these challenges water down the development of democratic skills in pupils in many respects (see e.g. Raiker & Rautiainen 2017). In the following, I examine the connection between these challenges and reality in the light of a few key arguments.

The contradictions of democracy in the Finnish school

In the following, I will examine the contradictions that occur in Finnish schools in relation to democracy. I will base the chapter on three arguments that, at the same, time summarise both the strengths and the significant challenges of Finnish democracy education.

Argument 1. Finnish teachers are among the most competent and highly trained in the world.

At least for as long as Finnish teachers have been required to complete a five-year higher education degree, Finnish comprehensive school teachers have been among the most competent and highly trained in the world. Finnish teachers are capable of applying many different pedagogic approaches, and they have the ability to understand different pupils. Likewise, Finnish comprehensive school teachers are provided with excellent skills for making qualified evaluations where they could still improve their performance and how they carry out their education tasks in practice. However, in reality, even though generally considered strong, there are many weaknesses associated with the professional skills of Finnish teachers. Many of them threaten the implementation of democracy education in particular. There-

fore, as far as competences for democracy are concerned, it is alarming that according to a survey commissioned by the Finnish National Agency for Education, more than 80% of comprehensive school teachers felt that they lacked the know-how to act as democracy educators. It is also worrying that the state of affairs has not given rise for any wider debate on the matter. The result is directly reflected on young people having brought up the issue that schools and their teachers do not encourage the youth to participate in schools, let alone in society (Myllyniemi 2014). The latest International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) shows the paradoxical relationship of the Finnish youth to democracy and society in general. Young Finnish people can specify how societal institutions function and what kind of values democratic societies respect, but they are not ready or willing to take action to maintain or to promote them. (Mehtäläinen, Niilo-Rämä & Nissinen 2017). Surveys have repeatedly shown that the civic society, which is the key platform for social activity in the democratic way of life due to giving individuals freedom to openly bring up their differing views, seems to appear distant to young people (Myllyniemi 2014; Mehtäläinen et al. 2017). However, the results are understandable from the perspective that they appear distant to teachers as well (Fornaciari & Männistö 2015; Finnish National Board of Education 2011; Syrjäläinen et al. 2006).

The experience of Finnish teachers of having weak readiness to provide democracy education is understandable if we examine Finnish teacher identity from the viewpoint of professional development of teachers. The traditional approach to the professional skills of Finnish teachers has been – and in many respects still is – that you are born to be a teacher, not to train as one (see e.g. Lanas & Kelchtermans 2015; Lindén 2010; Nikkola, Rautiainen & Räihä 2013). Therefore, it is important to emphasise that this particular issue plays a key role with respect to democracy education. Because, when entering teacher education, many students have experience of the Finnish education system and on how to get on in it, they repeat the same model when acting as teachers (Fornaciari & Männistö 2017; Räihä 2006). For this reason, the Finnish comprehensive school will be riddled with similar problems year after year if the obstacles to professional development of teachers are not taken seriously (see e.g. Matikainen, Männistö & Fornaciari 2018).

Argument 2. The operating and teaching culture of the Finnish comprehensive school is explicitly democratic.

This argument is equally multidimensional as the one before. Even though specifically the free-form teaching culture used in Finland gathers international acclaim, many publications (e.g. Fornaciari & Männistö 2017; Gretschel & Kiilakoski 2012; Raiker & Rautiainen 2017) point out that the operating culture of Finnish schools lacks many features characteristic of democratic way of life. The Finnish schools seldom address the issues of society, power or politics (see Mikkola 2006).

Another key democratic practice lacking from schools is the possibility of students to affect the operating culture and the contents of instruction at school (Finnish National Board of Education 2011). This problem can be seen to be partly connected to the strong need of teachers to control the classroom environment, because teachers easily seem to think that they know best what is most beneficial for children. On the other hand, the challenge in question is strongly linked to the prevailing educational thinking, which in English critical literature is referred to by the term 'schooling' instead of the term 'education' (see e.g. Biesta 2006; Edward-Groves, Grootenboar & Wilkinson 2018). The schooling type of educational thinking represents the conception according to which schooling can be considered to have clearly defined goals.

In most cases, the goals of the schooling type of thinking are considered to be linked with the objectives of the currently prevailing economy-oriented society (Biesta 2010). In such thinking, young people are seen as key future actors with a view to running of the society, for which reason they should be prepared for the kind of agency that emphasises such matters as entrepreneurship and other skills related to global market economy (see. e.g. Männistö 2018; Tervasmäki & Tomperi 2018; Finnish Government 2017). This kind of thinking, on the other hand, strongly conflicts with the democratic operating culture, since, firstly, democracy underscores the dynamic nature of people's mutual ways of life – their continuous development with the changing daily needs of the community, and the actual opportunities of individuals to influence their own living environment. Therefore, predetermined educational goals and methods do not represent the kind of education that prepares people for a democratic way of life.

Still, the Finnish educational culture also has certain explicitly democratic features. They can be found particularly in the currently valid national core curriculum for basic education (Finnish National Board of Education 2014). As a result of learner-based educational thinking, the possibilities of learners to affect their own studies have also increased to a certain extent. In addition, in the Finnish comprehensive school education one can see many operating methods based on dialogue and, depending on the school, pupils usually have at least some opportunities to affect the everyday operations at school. In most schools, however, this is currently implemented through compulsory student associations. This, on the other hand, is problematic from the viewpoint that only the chosen few get the chance to exert influence in the student associations.

Argument 3. Finnish comprehensive school classes are formed based on the local school principle that enables interaction between pupils from different family backgrounds.

This argument is essential with a view to democratic way of life, since, in regard to competences for democracy, it represents understanding and respect between different cultures and ways of life, and openness concerning them. Here, I want to underline that different cultures do not always mean, for example, ethnic cultural differences, since there are also several different ways of life among the mainstream population. It is evident that different views of society, strongly affected by the socio-economic background of individuals, determine cultural practices of different individuals.

However, the realisation of the local school principle is largely only part of the truth. For example, the studies of Bernelius and Vaattovaara (2016) have indicated that schools in Helsinki have begun to become segregated in accordance with the backgrounds of pupils. Accordingly, the researchers point out that the biggest differences between the schools with the poorest and the best educational achievements can be found in Helsinki. They specify that the differences within Helsinki are bigger than they are at the national level. Similarly, Seppänen et al. (2015) conclude that 'school shopping' has increased particularly within the middle classes. This phenomenon is strongly linked with the schooling type of thinking mentioned above, motivating parents to ensure that their children get the best possible

starting points for operating in the global market economy. For this reason, the schools focusing on the English language (and languages in general) and schools considered the best in the local scale have become an object of wide competition, and, for example, a large number of day care centres are already private. By way of example, a similar phenomenon can also be observed among students in higher education, since the educational choices of many students are steered by employment opportunities instead of personal interests or desire for wide-ranging education (Silvennoinen, Kalalahti & Varjo 2016).

Solutions to contradictions with the help of competences for democracy

I will now use the competences for democracy defined by the Council of Europe to go through matters that should be taken better into account in Finnish education system to ensure that pupils would be provided with key skills for a democratic way of life.

The operating and teaching culture in Finnish schools should be developed in a more democratic direction than it is today. Tentatively, we can state that the development of a democratic operating culture means the enhancement of the sense of responsibility and autonomy of all students. In other words, it does not concern only those who are already skilled to take action and who are elected to student associations and other responsible positions as well. It further emphasises the importance of this goal that the traditional mission of the comprehensive school to level out such differences seems to have failed as regards competences for democracy (Elo 2012; Myllyniemi 2014). As far as the operating culture is concerned, the incompleteness of matters, experimentation-based operating model that allow failure and operating models that emphasise the pupils' sense of responsibility with the help of distribution of power would help pupils develop into more democratic citizens than they are today and reduce the burden of teachers in running the everyday operations in a class.

Predetermined teaching objectives and the inability to make choices concerning own learning generate in pupils the need to receive constant external feedback on their development, which endangers their independent ability to evaluate their personal development (see Gellin et al. 2012). The same applies to the sense of responsibility that cannot develop if individu-

als are not given opportunities to make their own choices and see how they affect their actual operating environment (e.g. Biesta 2013; Matikainen et al 2018). This way, the potential enabled by a heterogeneous classroom environment equipped with a capable teacher is lost in many respects. Therefore, the development of the operating culture should be actively monitored by taking advantage of the competences for democracy. The competences for democracy offer an excellent framework for assessing the explicit democracy of an operating culture from many different perspectives.

Similarly, alongside the democratic development of the operating culture, the content of instruction should also change. Beginning from the first class of the comprehensive school, we should start paying more attention to providing pupils with skills enabling them to examine society and its operations in a comprehensive and critical manner. That means bringing many different perspectives as part of everyday discussion. Special emphasis should be laid on examining different viewpoints from the perspectives of equality, freedom and justice. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to understand that broad-based learning and the democratic way of life are indivisibly connected. This problem related to content of instruction plays a very essential role with a view to competences for democracy, because children coming from homes where politics and society are discussed in a larger extent are provided with significantly better skills to understand society and operate in it (Elo 2012).

In teacher education, increasing amount of attention should be paid to what is expected from a good teacher in a democratic society. The development of the competences for democracy requires that teachers see their work in a wider social framework than they are used to. This would shift the focus in education towards the question what kind of citizens we should educate to ensure that the democratic development of society could advance in an ideal way. Co-operation skills, openness to diversity and ability for active participation in the building of a common world are ways of operation and thinking to the development of which schools should pay more attention than they currently do. However, special attention should be paid to the quality of these skills, not the quantity. For example, as far as co-operation skills are concerned, we can state that seeking consensus in every situation does not promote the development of democratic practices (e.g. Kiilakoski 2014). Instead, it may even paralyse the ability of individ-

uals to understand themselves and their own limits and those of others. It would, therefore, be important to understand that you do not need to like everyone but in society you must be able to coexist with them. Therefore, the Council of Europe places at the core of democratic co-operation skills the conflict-resolution skills, the ability to listen to others and empathy. The polarisation development of today's societies is a clear manifestation of a crying need for such skills. In the development of these skills, on the other hand, understanding the professional competence of teachers in a manner deviating from our current view would play a central role.

The last and – probably due to the uncertainty over the world situation – the most challenging question concerns the missions of schools. It is difficult, if not impossible, to build an explicitly democratic operating culture in a society that emphasises working life skills and strict control at the expense of freedom and dynamic activity. As an example of this we could mention the increasingly tightening intervention policies on communication secrets. The education of autonomous citizens requires more extensive trust in the will and the desire of individuals to build a better world together than we have today. If no mutual trust exists between pupils and teachers or, in a wider scale, between citizens and decision-makers, it is evident that the mission of education is to produce passive and obedient citizens. Only a society based on the basic assumption that everyone –regardless of the great number of differing opinions – has the will to build a well-functioning and peaceful world strives to implement education tasked with providing individuals with skills to influence matters actively and directly. Therefore, in the era of global threats and increasing inequality, it is important to ask whether such common intent exists. The seemingly easy answer to many threats is to emphasise the control over individuals, but such a solution cannot be called democratic in any way. Accordingly, I claim that the strength of democracy education lies in the fact that it seeks trust instead of control. If a state of high mutual trust is achieved, then the need for threat scenarios and, consequently, control also diminishes in society. At the same time the quality of mutual trust and the skills needed for understanding and encountering diversity become stronger. This naturally leads to deepening of empathy and co-operation. Therefore, it is so that a society built upon trusting, open and respectful individuals, who understand their responsibility for common matters, can genuinely represent a place of equality

and respect for human dignity. However, such skills can only be learned through wise, humane and democratic education. A good tool for monitoring how public education succeeds in this educational task is applying the competences for democracy defined by the Council of Europe.

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Heikki
Kämäräinen
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Matti Rautiainen[6]
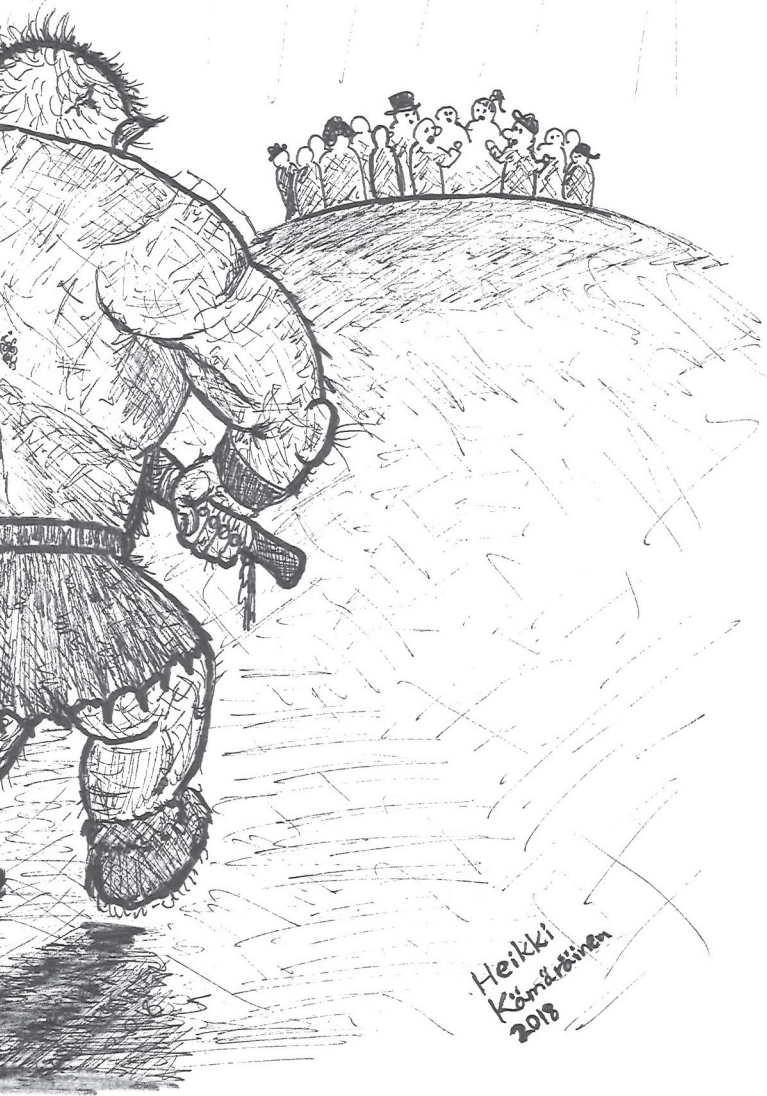
FROM SHADOWS INTO LIGHT?
TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE DIFFICULTY
OF MAKING DEMOCRACY VISIBLE

T o widen the perspective of teacher's work, in his article, Perttu Män-nistö underlined the need for a stronger framework provided by societal perspective and democratic way of life to teacher education. The issue could be described as kind of an eternal question in relation to which teacher education has been wandering in the land of shadows for a long time. The minimal social orientation of teacher education was already emphasised in assessments of teacher education programmes through-out the 20th century (Jussila & Saari 1999). Of course, we must remember that, in Finland, teacher education was born in the 1860s, when society was anything but democratic. Finland was part of the Grand Duchy of Russia, where, on the other hand, Alexander II did launch some experiments influ-enced by ideals of liberalism. As regards schooling, it manifested itself as elementary schools intended for both boys and girls. The same applied to teacher education that was launched in Jyväskylä in 1863, where a teacher training college for women began operating alongside a teacher training college for men.

The relationship between social development and formal education is very strong, and particularly interesting when it comes to Finland. The sta-tus of strong democratic citizenship education at schools has been called to question many times, and, as a result of different struggles, schooling was given a new direction, where the practising of a democratic way of life was reduced to a minimum, if not to non-existence. Special culmination points over the years included the civil war of 1918 (Arola 2003) as well as the rad-icalisation of the political movement in the 1960s and 1970s. With these events, the struggle over the direction of schooling accelerated (Kärelampi 1999; Leskinen 2016). In both cases, the solution was a certain kind of neu-tralisation of schools of any political issues characterised by the possibility of seeing things differently. The simultaneous democratisation of society in different ways created a situation where education was strongly founded on democratic values, which, however, remained without strong ties to the

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6   Matti Rautiainen, Lecturer, Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä.

educational practices. Teacher education is an excellent example of this. When I was conducting a study of human rights and democracy training in teacher education with Arja Virta and Liisa Vanhanen-Nuutinen, the results were very clear. Both the teacher education providers and teacher students considered the democratic values and way of life to be the foundation of the whole education programme but serving primarily as the foundation only. The contents or practices of education mostly failed to focus on the core issues of democracy. In other words, in the everyday training, the value of democracy was much lower than its fundamental nature would suggest. (Rautiainen, Vanhanen-Nuutinen & Virta 2014.)

Are we allowed to talk about democracy?

I will briefly return to the time when I personally began acting as educator of teachers, to the 1990s and early 2000s. The results of the CivEd study, the predecessor of the ICCS study, were published at the time, and they gave rise to considerable publicity, because they highlighted not only the lack of interest of young people towards civic participation, but also the fact that there were hardly any channels for participation at schools. The reaction to this was fast implementation of different projects. Schools focused especially to getting the student association activities firmly established. In teacher education, the focus was on the development of civic activity (e.g. Civic Activity in Teacher Education was part of Prime Minister Vanhanen's Citizen Participation Policy Programme 2004-2007). In the early 2000s, the concepts of democracy education and democratic culture that became more common in the 2010s were hardly discussed. I remember that when I used democracy-oriented terms, I was not only frowned at, but also verbally criticised for using the concept that was considered highly political and unsuitable for the educational context. Many people saw the traumatic school council experiment of the 1970s being repeated in the 21st century version.

Instead of the term democracy, such concepts as active citizenship and civic activity were used. In most countries, the use of different concepts and the specification of the relationship between them is part of everyday life. However, in this article, I will not go any further into those specifications, but I will return to personal experience. My opinion was that these terms were favoured because of the pre-existing semantic structure associated

with them. Active citizenship was largely defined through the concept of model citizenship related to civic education, which in the new situation was modified with factors increasing pupils' own activity, but within the conventional framework (e.g. the activation of student association activities). As a concept, civic activity was equally well suited for increasing pupils' own activity within an old framework, in this case by giving more emphasis to the traditional methods of exerting influence, such as opinion writings, discussion events and debates, in the everyday teacher education. All in all, the early 2000s could be called the era of moderate democracy education, when the problematic nature of the situation was acknowledged but the solutions were sought through old methods.

Something new

Over the past few years, democracy education has become a commonly used term, which in its widest meaning refers to a democratic way of life that the school as a whole can promote. By its side, another term, citizenship education, has become quite common, its widest meaning referring to the strong democratic agency of the learner. There are several reasons why democracy has become 'acceptable' again. People say that time heals all wounds. For most people who are now working with democracy education, the democracy experiments of the 1960s and 1970s are rather a part of the history of education than self-experienced political struggles. After a long history of stable development, even democracy has met some blows and threats. With extremist movements, false truths and other factors increasing uncertainty, the concern over the state of democracy has also grown and, as a result, so has the understanding of how important it is to cherish democracy. People are ready to defend democracy and to remember that democracy is never ready but requires constant work and development.

In other words, we are in for something new not only in relation to the concept but also in relation to action. The democratic way of life and education to it form a complex entity, as the 20 competences of democratic culture defined by the Council of Europe show. The benefit in thinking of democracy as a culture and a way of life is that it enables inclusion of different approaches as part of the development of democracy. Even though many of the sub-areas of the competences belong to the core of teacher education (skills in particular), their relationship to democracy in particular has

remained undefined. A report on teacher education (Rautiainen, Vanhan-en-Nuutinen & Virta 2014) pointed out that the integration of democracy into the contents and operating culture of teacher education has remained shallow. The competences defined by the Council of Europe provide one opportunity to combine these with each other. Still, it requires co-operation between the providers of teacher education on how the competences can be included in training and how their status and importance for democracy is to be examined. Over the past few years, my personal experiences from the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Jyväskylä, which uses a phenomenon-based curriculum, have been positive. The idea of phenomenon-based approach, the study of matters from various points of view, supports integration of democracy into studies, because in connection with each phenomenon we can ask: what does that mean from the perspective of democracy and democracy education?

Democratic culture means activity, community life, that we are building together. In addition to building a bridge to democratic culture through the contents of education, we are doing the very same thing through our everyday practices. Since we need a mirror for reflecting our own activities, the framework of competences functions here as well. The community of providers of teacher education, like any other teacher community, can ask itself do our activities follow the path marked out by the competences? Where do we have room for development? Where have we made good progress?

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Elina Kataja, Liisa Partio, Riitta Ranta, Auli Setälä and Kirsi Tarkka[7]

INVOLVEMENT, PARTICIPATION OR PARTICIPATORY INVOLVEMENT? TOWARDS CLARITY IN A JUNGLE OF CONCEPTS

When we talk about involvement, we often encounter a jungle of concepts, where a few terms closely resembling each other are used all mixed up, even though they have quite different meanings each. In our article, we focus on the terminology related to the following three concepts: involvement, participation and participatory involvement. We open up the key objectives of involvement in comprehensive pedagogy from the perspective of early childhood education.

Involvement is a challenging term, because it is easy to assume it as automatic and take it for granted; of course, we listen to children, of course, we let them influence, of course, we take their opinions into account. However, when we take a closer look on the daily activities – be it in the field of early childhood education or teaching – we notice that it is not necessarily so strongly built with involvement as starting point. The opportunities for being heard and involved and for influencing one's own life may remain very shallow and narrow. It may not be possible to find arenas of development for them before we genuinely focus on the value basis of education and teaching and the conception of learning at work community and professional level, and, consequently, on the very core of involvement.

In accordance with the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care, involvement is one of the key starting points of education, teaching and care as well as the objective of such activities. The values of involvement are strongly emphasised in all contents of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care and the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, fundamentally relying on the Convention on Rights of the Child. With a view to developing the operating culture and removing obstacles to involvement, it is essential to establish a

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7   Elina Kataja, Planner of Early Childhood Education, Hämeenlinna.
    Liisa Partio, Senior Specialist, civic society
    and welfare policy, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare.
    Riitta Ranta, Pedagogic Director of Early Childhood Education, Janakkala.
    Auli Setälä, Special Advisor, Trade Union of Education in Finland.
    Kirsi Tarkka, Special Adviser, Finnish National Agency for Education

common understanding of what is sought with involvement and why it is important. Everything we do, how we do it and what we strive for should be based on a common understanding of what is meant by involvement. However, often in our daily lives we may pass the in-depth debate about the value basis, and conceptions of learning, children and education, turning our energies directly to building activities, structures and contents. But if the foundations have not been built properly, the whole construction will wobble. Mutual understanding is not generated by itself. It requires debate, critical reflection of the existing practices and bold initiatives. To ensure that we are discussing the same matters using the same concepts, we should begin by differentiating between three concepts in particular.

Involvement is a multidimensional and comprehensive starting point for education that, at its best, is implemented across the whole operating culture, penetrating all contents and forms of operations, instead of being realised at a specific, preassigned moment ('moment of involvement'), during which the child can affect certain matters specified by a professional within a predetermined framework. Involvement is a comprehensive philosophy of education, which has at its core genuine dialogic interaction, communality, reciprocal respect and a view of humanity, according to which children are valuable agents here and now with important perspectives and opinions concerning themselves worth listening to and taking into account. It is based on the conception of learning that understands the value of daily moments, motivation, commitment and doing things together as starting points for learning. When children are given a chance to plan the contents of their everyday life, they are more committed to the activities and, as a consequence, they also learn more. In pedagogy implemented from the starting points of involvement, the key point is to give children an opportunity to participate, to feel being appreciated for who they are, to get opportunities to influence their everyday environment and to feel that they are important, competent members of their community.

> *"When starting her day-care path, the three-year old was silent and shy. The only initiative to communicate with the adults she made during the first days at day care was the quiet comment she made, avoiding eye contact: I've strawberries on my socks. All people around her admired the new, wonderful socks with strawberries on them together, and she*

made the comment on strawberry socks again and again. An educa-tor told the child that she knows a song about strawberries and asked whether the child wanted to hear it. The girl nodded, and the strawberry song was sung. The strawberry song became an immediate hit in the group, and the timid girl smiled happily – after all, the song had been inspired by her socks. Six months later, the strawberry song, which has become one of the most popular songs in the group, still pops up every now and then in different situations. At those times, the lively girl, who has already found her place in the group, giggles with joy and always announces with pride that the song was inspired by her pretty straw-berry socks." (Video training on involvement, Finnish National Agency for Education & Kataja 2018.)

Involvement primarily means hearing and encountering the child, respect-ful interaction with the child, and giving a voice to and hearing the opin-ions of the child in one's daily life. It involves making common plans, doing things together, living together. Involvement is a philosophy of education and a set of values on which the activities are based. It is not a single way of action, a sum of practices or a specific operating model, which is complete and unchanged, and into which every child coming to a day care centre is adapted. The emphasis in early childhood education based on the founda-tion of involvement is at a much deeper level than the application of indi-vidual methods. It is more about why and how things are done than about what is being done.

When talking about enabling involvement, the term professionals often use is **participatory involvement**, which, however, has primarily a differ-ent meaning than supporting the opportunities for involvement. Participa-tory involvement refers to activity where someone has already determined to what kind of activity and in which way a child will be involved in. Here the conception of exerting influence is significantly narrower, because it is a question of limited activity, where a professional holds the position of power. He or she strives to activate children to a specific activity within a predetermined framework. Involvement, on the other hand, entails an aspect of voluntary participation, and according to Turja (2011), when talking about participatory involvement, the child becomes rather a passive object of measures than a subject acting of his or her free will.

We can examine the difference between participatory involvement and enabling involvement, when we look at supporting the opportunities of both children and guardians to exert influence. On which one of the two do we base involvement when it comes to the guardians' opportunities to exert influence? Do we offer limited forums, surveys and structures, within the limits of which we strive to get answers to specific, limited questions? Or do we offer alongside it wider opportunities to be involved in the everyday operations, to see the activities closer, to make initiatives and to influence the activities in other ways than within the limits of formulated questions? Similarly, are children given opportunities to affect matters more within the limits provided by adults, such as choosing a song for a music session or voting on which play will begin the exercise session? Or are they given opportunities for genuine, continuous involvement in the encounters during basic care or in the comprehensive building of activities?

It is also important to observe that involvement is not the same thing as **participation** either, since in involvement the concept of voluntary engagement plays an essential role. All people do not need to be interested in the same matters all the time or participate in the same activities. Involvement is primarily a feeling of being part of a community, being met face to face and determining one's own level of engagement, since having all children participate in the same activity does not necessarily mean that an individual child would feel being involved. According to Leinonen (2014), involvement can ultimately be considered "the child's own experience of a significant situation or encounter in an everyday setting. It cannot be determined from above or assumed that mere participation would create an experience of involvement. The experience of involvement generates feelings of joy and enthusiasm in a child and turns the situation into a moment of meaningful learning and interaction to which a child personally engages in."

Participation can, however, be regarded as one objective of involvement. The professionals of early childhood education are tasked with providing children with many kinds of opportunities to participate in different activities, to do and try different things, and to visit different places. The educators have an understanding of how children experience things and they adapt their operations accordingly. Leena Turja (2011) has distinguished the concepts of involvement and participatory involvement based on the basic distinction that involvement does not mean only participation and

being present, but the core of the matter lies in children's own opportunities to affect the activities they are taking part in. Participation may begin from the starting points of involvement, or it can be activity where the child is (actively or passively) engaged in a situation that has been built on other people's terms. One can participate without being in any way involved at an emotional level, and, on the other hand, one can be involved without taking active part in a specific activity.

> *"In the afternoons, some of the children often want to arrange an exercise session, where they take turns instructing the others. One child always joins them with great enthusiasm but does not actually want to participate in the exercises. I have often asked the child to join in, but, so far, she has not wanted to – she just keeps on observing actively from the sidelines. Later, we happened to discuss the matter with the child's mother, who told me that the child enthusiastically instructs her siblings and parents to do similar exercises at home." (Video training on involvement, Finnish National Agency for Education & Kataja 2018.)*

To achieve a genuine and real involving operating culture, the development of the operating culture should be focused on making involvement a part of genuine daily activities instead of needing to develop any separate methods for that. Instead of using extravagant structures borrowed from the world of adults that adults have come up with (structural agendas of influencing, suggestion boxes, children's meetings etc.), the development of operating culture of involvement should be transferred more strongly to everyday situations, to the daily encounters, to every moment where you have a choice of either acting in a most beautiful way encountering the child, listening to the child and supporting his or her small everyday opportunities of influencing matters or, alternatively, in a routine, set way, preventing involvement. Without a profound pedagogic examination, daily, routinely repeating situations, such as eating, moments of rest, putting clothes on or taking them off or going to toilet are quite potential forums for breaking the human rights of children if these activities are based on age-old traditions and done from the premise that the main goal is fast transition, with the focus on strong adult control, the more important activity being somewhere ahead in the schedule (or already left behind).

"A child returned from the Christmas holiday with a brand-new woollen overalls. The overalls were such a great thing that he wanted to wear them all morning. After lunch, the child announced that he will wear the overalls even when taking a nap. Knowing the child, I knew that this matter was so important to him that he would not give up the overalls very easily. The most probable outcome would be that the overalls would not go to his pigeon-hole without a lot of fight and wailing. I was prepared to go through the struggle but, after having discussed with the child, I decided that I will be flexible this time and let him try. I told him that he would certainly get hot wearing the woollen overalls in bed, but he could try it. The child went under the covers wearing the overalls. Quarter of an hour later, I heard a small whisper from the darkened rest room: "I'm terribly hot." We took off the woollen overalls and placed them by the bed and the child fell asleep. When waking up from the nap, the most important thing was the child's joyful announcement that you were totally right, that no one can sleep wearing woollen overalls, because you get awfully hot in them. What would the child have learned if I had fought to force him not to wear the overalls? He would have learned that I was a stupid adult who would not let him sleep wearing the piece of clothing that at that moment was the most important to him, whereas now he learned something far more essential through own experience." (Video training on involvement, Finnish National Agency for Education & Kataja 2018.)

It is important to build a comprehensive operating culture, where involvement is achieved in all activities, taking into account the diverse situations in basic care, the various moments of interaction and encounter, and different functional situations. If children's opportunities to influence the activities are reduced to allowing them to decide whether they eat a whole or half a piece of crispbread, or every now and then letting them choose the song being sung at the morning circle, it is a question of virtual involvement instead of genuinely hearing the children's voice. In such a case, the opportunities to influence are strictly confined within the boundaries set for the situation by an adult and, instead of genuine influencing, the child's agency is reduced to the child answering a question posed by an adult by selecting a response within alternative responses defined by the adult. The

educator has predetermined the setting, place, composition of the group and content of activity, and the child's role, at the most, is to select between different defined (small or large piece of bread, cheese or cold cuts on the bread, blue or red shirt, will you draw using markers or crayons, etc.) or undefined alternatives (which song). The essential thing here, however, is that the answers are selected from among a clear, limited set of responses: the way the question is posed defines that you must take bread and that you must sing a song in any case. In this setting, it would not be accepted as an answer if the child said that let us not sing anything but do something else instead.

> *"In our team, we were reflecting on the eating situations and found a countless number of rules, some of which we were not even aware: you will get milk and bread only after you have eaten your meal; you must butter a specific side of the bread; you will not get any bread if you have not eaten your meal; if you have already eaten bread, you will not get more food, but if you wanted one more piece of bread, you would have to take some more food before getting it; and – the silliest of them all – you will not get a xylitol pastille or chewing gum if you have not eaten properly, as if it were some kind of a reward for eating. We do not know from which day and age those rules stemmed from, but we had conscientiously internalised them over the years, never considering why we followed them. By giving up those rules, the whole eating situation became more pleasant. In all respects, it became a more peaceful and meaningful situation, where the focus was not on the rules and on monitoring them, but on a nice, shared meal." (Video training on involvement, Finnish National Agency for Education & Kataja 2018.)*

Turja (2011) emphasises that the development of formal methods of hearing and influencing, such as children's meetings, assessment forms intended for children or, for example, common suggestion boxes for children and their parents are important. However, the activities should still purposefully advance from separate moments and methods of involvement towards a constantly present operating culture of involvement. These operating methods do not mutually exclude one another. We also need formal

methods of involvement and channels of influencing but, without genuine hearing and involvement built into everyday activities, they are nothing more than superficial methods that ultimately remain meaningless in the entity of early childhood education. The essential thing is to build a strong foundation on top of which the above-mentioned methods of hearing give support for the entity, but do not by themselves constitute the weak backbone of the operating culture of involvement. Instead of falling in love with methods as such and making them an end in themselves, we should learn to genuinely examine the goals and objectives of education and the entity of early childhood education, where every part contributes to the big picture instead of serving just the purpose of applying specific methods and their implementation.

Participatory structures are important in the development of the operating culture of involvement but their core objective – not the method in itself but the objective behind it – must be kept in mind at all times. At their best, some structures of involvement, such as a play board, help children make choices, provide opportunities and enhance self-regulation and, at their worst, function as a forum for an adult's (even arbitrary) exercise of power, where the method becomes an end in itself. According to a study conducted by Roos (2014), children told that adults decided how many children fit into a play between children and new children could join an already ongoing play only at an adult's decision. Similarly, Leinonen (2014) points out that the play board supports children's involvement only if it changes and develops concurrently with the growing competences of children, and if their operation is not based on them acting as an instrument of power for an adult that limits involvement and prevents the development and combination of different plays and creation of new, creative plays.

> *"There are five children playing home. They are intensely and enthusiastically engaged in the play, everyone having a clear role in the play, fully immersed in a shared story. However, according to the play board, only three children fit into the same play. In the heat of the play, the noise and speed increase, as the storyline takes children to a party, and makes them dance, laugh and play drums by banging plastic saucepans with spoons. At this point an adult, reacting to the loud noise, comes and interrupts the home play, gives feedback on the play getting too wild, and*

orders children to calm down and 'behave themselves'. She asks who are actually involved in the play only to conclude that two of the children involved do not have their pictures on the play board. As a result, two children have to leave the play and three children remain in the play which does not continue as it was before but soon dies out altogether."

Both in the internal discourse within the sector and in the social education and teaching sector discourse, one hears some criticism about involvement supporting the opportunities of the children who are already active and quick-tongued and leaving the children who lack such skills aside. Early childhood education offers great opportunities for evening out differences in activity and passivity that emerge already in the early phases of a small child's life and for creating foundations for preventing exclusion. However, these benefits are lost if the operating culture of involvement is built in a narrow way, using adult-centred methods only. As channels of influence, random moments of involvement or children's meetings may not be natural forums for children; they require us to consider to what extent structures picked from the adult word actually fit into children's world (Roos 2014). Another problem emerging in formal forums of hearing is the fact that not all people can or want to express their opinions in the same manner or consider it sensible in the same way as others (Leinonen 2014). If involvement is built strongly upon the use of adult-centred methods, there is a risk that those already active, enthusiastic and capable of verbal interaction are given more opportunities to participate and influence, while the voices of the silent ones or those needing different kinds of channels of influence remain unheard.

"It is important for us that all children try many different activities to find new areas of interest and ways of expressing themselves. However, instead of compelling them to do so, we want to begin from things that interest children in the first place. In our group, playing with cars was a continuous hit for a while. Instead of lifting the cars on the upper shelves of the cupboard to compel children to choose something else to play with, we began to come up with ideas for various new elements to add around the play with cars. Our group came up with a car park project, where the children designed their own parking halls and realised them

in the workshop from blocks of wood, which they sawed, hammered, glued together and painted. This brought new energy to the play with cars, and, at the same time, we could bring new contents to the activity by seizing the children's natural objects of interests." (Video training on involvement, Finnish National Agency for Education & Kataja 2018.)

Involvement never means leaving children alone to take care of themselves and to attend to their own well-being, growth and learning, nor does it mean that children should be of a specific kind to be involved. Involvement begins from every child's own starting points and areas of interest. It is about hearing every child in the way fit for the child in question, the sensitive observation of the child and the matters and areas of interest significant to him or her, and about giving the child opportunities to participate in activities in his or her own way, from his or her personal starting points. The educator's task is to maintain the sensitivity to support everyone's inclusion in the community and to enable that everyone get their voices heard. Children's meetings may function well but, in addition to them, we need to build comprehensive opportunities for hearing children in our everyday operations. A child who sits silently or, alternatively, – when observed from an adult's point of view – does not concentrate and disturbs other children in the children's meeting and does not bring up any ideas in common brainstorming sessions may produce ideas about matters and areas of interest important to him or her in the course of play or during conversations while eating. There are children who learn to take initiative in a strong, verbal manner, such as "could we do this" and "I have an idea", but there are also a lot of others, whose ideas require a lot more from us adults to be taken into account. From the educator, they require observation, discussion in natural situations as well as the ability to seize even those ideas that have not quite yet transformed into actual ideas. (Video training on involvement, Finnish National Agency for Education & Kataja 2018.)

"After breakfast, a 1.5-year-old child points the CD player to the educator with her finger saying: 'Titi titi' The educator asks whether the child wants to listen to Titi bear songs. The child nods emphatically. The educator puts the CD on. The child spins around with a wide smile on her face. The educator sits on the floor and sings the songs in unison with

the player, starting to clap the rhythm against her knees. The child sits next to the educator and starts to clap as well. Other toddlers also gather around them. After a while, the educator sits with five 1-2-year-old children around her. One child joins the song with enthusiasm, another one tries to keep up with the lyrics, and a third one claps the rhythm against her knees. Every now and then the children dance, spin around and play with the song. The educator takes the activity forward, introducing new musical elements. The joint activity that began from one child's initiative makes children engage in the activity for much longer than would probably have happened if it had been a moment marked in the calendar initiated by an adult. When the educator is strongly aware of the objectives of education – in this case concerning the objectives of musical education – he or she is able to apply them to the moments initiated by children and enrich such activities." (Kataja 2018)

The development of an operating culture that promotes the involvement of children requires raising a common value debate within the whole community. It requires a comprehensive change of culture, where the pedagogic thinking of educators is expanded, and the wishes, views and initiatives of children are taken into account in both short-term and long-term planning. (Fónsen, Heikka & Elo 2014.) The key is to approach the matter more actively with children as the starting point, to lower oneself to children's level and to examine the operations thoroughly through children's eyes. One has to dare to shake the old traditions and to genuinely and by all means available listen to the most important customers of early childhood education, the children themselves, and to what they have to say and narrate. "We cannot know what is best for children without listening to them. To be able to really listen, we have to trust them and their understanding, we have to believe that they have more and more important things to tell about what it is like to be a child than we have." (Laajarinne 2011) It does not create involvement, if we sit down once a week with children and ask them how they are doing, what they think about this and that, and what are they interested in. Involvement is a way of being with children. The objective is to build a good day for everyone today, and every other day as well.

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Jan Löfström, Mia Malama, Paula Mattila,
Laura-Maria Sinisalo, Satu Elo and Kari Kivinen[8]

THE SENSE OF INVOLVEMENT IS WHAT COUNTS. IT IS CREATED WHEN ONE'S OWN STORY CONTRIBUTES TO THE SCHOOL'S COMMON NARRATIVE

School doors open to involvement

When pupils open the door to their school, it is important that they get to open a door to a place where they feel they belong. They can feel togetherness at the level of the whole school, their own class or some other, smaller group.

Schools have many structures that support involvement, such as the student association, and different practices through which pupils and students are heard directly, or through a board representing the student association or class representatives. Furthermore, schools have different clubs, environmental and other theme groups, break activities, Schools on the Move instructors, peer supporters, meal councils, tutor student activities and much more. Many pupils get to be involved in school activities through these groups, but too many also feel that they are left outside them. At the same time, they may remain outside the whole school community. How do you recognise a person left outside? How could you get everyone involved?

At its best, the practice and implementation of genuine involvement at school leads to every student feeling a part of a group, feeling accepted as he or she is, and getting a daily confirmation that he or she is good at something. Genuine involvement brings with it:

- The sense of competence
- The sense of belonging
- The feeling of safety
- The sense of being seen and encountered.

In the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education of 2014, involvement of pupils is one of the cross-cutting themes. The National Core Curriculum examines involvement in chapters focusing on value basis, transversal competences and operating culture, among others. Involvement is also one of the key principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that constitutes the judicial basis of the National Core Curriculum. A local curriculum – updated and developed as necessary – ensures by means of practical entries what the measures, objectives and contents supporting the readiness for involvement of pupils entail and how their implementation is supported and monitored.

All students must have the opportunity to develop their involvement skills with the help of teachers and other adults at their schools. In other words, they are not the task or elite skill of a small, special group – they are not the private property of the board of the student association or the sustainable development team. We must bear in mind that operating culture of involvement is also made visible through the activities of all adults working in the school community – teachers, the principal, cleaners, kitchen staff, the school nurse, real estate management – throughout the whole community. Adults often give children a pivotal example on how to manage common matters in a way that creates experiences of togetherness. Despite their various tasks, do all adults in school share a similar value basis and do they acknowledge that at school they are acting as role models for children? It is good to consider how this is shown and made possible in the practices of your own school.

Everyone is entitled to involvement; Involvement has its consequences

Even in the lower comprehensive school, it is essential to start the development of involvement by first defining what involvement means in your own school, in your teaching and in the schoolwork of students. After that, you examine whether all students are given opportunities to participate.

The opportunities are built by teaching and practising key skills needed for involvement, including participation, influencing, democratic thinking and building of togetherness. All of the above are supported by language awareness, understanding of the matters and concepts being dis-

cussed, and the ability to verbally express your own ideas and intentions in a constructive manner.

The development of competences for involvement includes the development of skills, competences, values, attitudes as well as the will. At the same time, it supports building of a positive self-image and self-esteem, and people learn to identify obstacles to participation and acquire – constructive – means for eliminating them.

Pupils are in different stages as concerns their competences for involvement. It is important that schools support the competences for involvement of all pupils. Otherwise, it may happen that only those with better developed skills get to develop their competences further, whereas those with less developed competences are left aside. It is the school's duty to level out differences between pupils and to support pupils with weaker school performance in particular to participate more. Therefore, participation should be examined as a spiral-like process, where the basic competences are created very early by providing a safe space for self-expression and being part of a group.

It is important to understand and show that involvement is interactive and justified. In other words, pupils are explained why they are being asked to make a decision or to influence a specific matter and what will follow, when they take part in the decision-making. In addition, they are given real feedback on the impacts of participation. The smaller the pupils are, the faster the feedback must be given! The reciprocity in giving feedback must also be taken into account. In other words: justifications are given every time decisions are made, and the children are told what kind of effects their viewpoint had. At the same time, children learn about decision-making processes.

Everyone will find a personal way to participate

How do your classes select students to groups representing the whole class? Will such factors as social skills, extrovert personality or even popularity become emphasised in the selection process? What are the criteria for deselection?

A large group of students, who would benefit from the skills learned in these particular groups and whose experiences and views would be valuable

for the whole class and even the school, is left outside the groups that build involvement. All teachers can help pupils practise the involvement skills in the safe environment of their own classes in the form of, say a small group or pair work. That would also allow pupils who hesitate to join involvement groups because, for example, they do not want to bring up their opinions in a strange group or fear that they have insufficient language skills.

It is clear that not all pupils participate in the management of common matters in the same way, nor do they need to. All types of participants are needed in classrooms and in society: debaters, active listeners, commentators, initiators, people who refine the ideas presented by others and, of course, those who put things into practice in concrete terms.

Teachers know their own groups, and, in a classroom setting, they are able to take into consideration the pupils who may not necessarily want to or are as yet incapable of being verbally active in matters related to involvement. In the classroom, pupils can express their opinions using pieces of paper in different colours, they can draw their own opinions, or use different images, such as a happy, serious, sad of angry faces. This will involve a larger part of pupils and help them practise important skills.

In this context as well, it is important to remember to support involvement also through language awareness. The more complex the matter, the more important it is – for every pupil – to explain the words and concepts by which the matter is easier to understand, and therefore give them means to verbally express feelings and views for and against the matter.

More examples on participatory involvement of everyone

Different kinds of methods are needed to get participants with different voices and people acting in different rhythms to participate. To support the engagement of people with different voices, the class can use a similar kind of 'chatter box' as researcher Tuure Tammi (2017) used in his study on the participation of lower comprehensive school pupils. The chatter box is a cardboard box where pupils can put their ideas for discussion or propose matters they hope the class would make decisions on. The pieces of paper can be coded in different colours as in Tammi's study. Then the pupils would, for example, write the matters they hope the whole class would discuss on a yellow piece of paper, the matters they wish to discuss privately

with the teacher on a green one, and the matters they hope the teacher would decide on on a blue one. Pupils may often want to do certain things with the whole class and other things in a smaller group or with the teacher. Each one of these practices may support the child's feeling of involvement. It is important that the pupils feel that they can influence which things of importance to them are highlighted, how they are handled and how decisions on them are made.

In class, pupils can also practise their discussion skills in many different ways and in various connections. The teacher may, for example, ask the pupils to discuss a certain matter in pairs in such a manner that each of them has been given a specific role or opinion to defend. For example, pupil A may be of the opinion that cold cuts are the only possible alternative to top a sandwich, whereas pupil B's view is that cheese is the only correct alternative. Each pupil may find interesting viewpoints in defence of these opinions. It does not matter at all if the topic of discussion is a little bit silly. The important point of such a concrete discussion exercise is that with the help of such and exercise pupils learn to express their own opinions, justify them, listen to each other's justifications and discuss things as things. Through practice, pupils thus also learn to better discuss things that are of real importance to them and of which they may have stronger opinions.

Involving discussion can also be practised in such a manner that pupils select/are assigned roles with the help of which they practise different skills. For one week, one of the pupils is assigned as class leader with certain responsibilities, tasks and rights, and another pupil holds some other role – then they switch the roles. After this, the pupils tell what they experienced when acting in the role and reflect on what they learned about involvement.

In its most concrete form, being excluded from involvement manifests itself in someone being repeatedly left alone during breaks, for example. Pupils may agree on suitable solutions by which this matter can be addressed in a discreet manner. In one school, pupils have agreed with the teachers that they have a friendship pole on the school yard, and, in another school, there is a friendship bench for the same purpose. A pupil may go to the pole or the bench if he or she does not want to be alone. Other school children pick up the signal and go to the friendship post to ask how the pupil is doing. If the pupil's concern is, for instance, bullying, the children have agreed with the adults of the school on how to act in such situations.

Involvement is built as part of school traditions

A significant positive resource many schools have are their own traditions which may be related to different annual or weekly events. Many adults are also familiar with the idea of 'the spirit of our school', and they have positive associations about it. Through traditions, people attach themselves to a community larger than themselves. In certain situations, an individual may also feel the traditions as constraining them, and, here, the important thing is that the pupils can feel that they are involved in creating and maintaining school traditions that they consider a positive resource. It is quite common that people consider a certain tradition of their own school old even if it were created only a few years back. This is the strength of traditions: they are created and developed all the time, and they can still appear safe and permanent, acting as kind of anchors which individuals can hold on to when seeking communities where they feel like belonging.

Involvement means creating belief in the future. Through involvement, pupils strengthen their ability to understand how positive future is created by means of individual words and actions – but, first and foremost, how future is built in small and larger communities. Therefore, we should build school traditions and mission, and the sense of being 'us' in such a manner that the story of building a sustainable future would be intertwined in them. Every pupil has a role in this story, which may be small now but become bigger in the future.

Every year, new pupils add a whole new chapter or layer to the school's narrative. The school is wise to make this chapter a positively visible and involving one.

Harnessing the surrounding community to enhance involvement at school

The school is always part of the local community, consisting of, among others, other schools, day-care centres, residents' associations, other civic organisations, companies, local media, as well as authorities and persons in positions of trust associated with decision-making and management of public affairs.

Children can make proposals and express wishes related to the development of their living environment that are based on their personal experiences and interests. They have genuine value as evidence. A school or even a

single class may give relevance to such proposals and wishes as community in such a manner that the common voice of children, the mutually negotiated message, is conveyed to the local community as the message of 'our school' or 'our class'.

Reciprocal visits between schools, day-care centres and actors representing other local community operators are important since face-to-face encounters are a natural way of generating an experience of having common goals and interests, when the parties can personally hear and listen to what the other parties have at heart. In such encounters, the parties could also envision in which ways continuity could be created for the participation of pupils in the matters of the local community.

Different events and campaigns often provide the most natural way to participate and influence. It is also important to build more permanent forms of co-operation and interaction channels to enable smooth involvement of every new grade of pupils in the discussion about the matters of their own local community.

Chains of involvement

The chains of involvement must be created purposely, and they must also be monitored. Pupils should be mandated to engage new pupils in the practices of involvement.

In old schools, the structures of involvement may already be there, but in new or combined schools the structures and narratives must be purposely created.

It is particularly important to ensure that the chain of involvement is not broken in different transition points at school. Arrangements should be made on how to agree on the continuity of involvement when pupils transfer to the next level of education. It may be possible to provide pupils with instruments for involvement when they are moving away from the area.

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Towards a Better Democracy

ON VIKA!

Heikki Kämäräinen
2018

Lilja Kaijaluoto and Tiina Karhuvirta[9]

HIGHER COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REACHING OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

What is meant by competence for involvement? We posed this question to ourselves[10] in a seminar organised by the Finnish National Agency for Education and set out to outline a framework for this concept. We understood the framework to be connected to motivation and the attitudes of showing interest towards social themes in general. The values defined in the European competences for democracy (Council of Europe 2016), such as justice, fairness and equality, form the basis for the competence for involvement. Basic education is tasked with levelling out differences related to children's growth environments in respect to what kind of models they have about acting as citizens, and more specifically as active citizens. During basic education, children and young people are given several opportunities to try how to act in the role of an active citizen or an active pupil.

The concept 'competence for involvement' developed by our group consists of self-efficacy, curiosity, creativity and perseverance. According to Bandura (1997) self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to successfully accomplish something. One of the elements of the European competences for democracy (Council of Europe 2016) is civic-mindedness which, combined with self-efficacy, refers to individual's view of how capable one is of operating as an active and influential member of one's own community. The second feature we included in the concept was curiosity. If willing to influence and participate in the operation of a community or society, an individual must be interested in the common matters of the society concerned, the decisions made and their impacts, as well as the values behind these decisions. As the third feature, we highlighted creativity, since without flexible thinking it is difficult to generate new, constructive visions. We thought of creativity rather in the sense of everyday creativity, characterised

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9 Lilja Kaijaluoto, Special Needs Teacher, Latokartano Comprehensive School, Helsinki.
Tiina Karhuvirta, Senior Adviser (citizenship education), Development Centre Opinkirjo.

10 In addition to the authors, the other members of the group were Jari Ikola, Tampere; Karoliina Inha, Finnish National Agency for Education; Mikael Lehtonen, Union of Upper Secondary School Students in Finland; Vesa Raasumaa, Lappeenranta; Kirsi Uusitalo, Allianssi and Niklas Wilhelmsson, Ministry of Justice.

primarily by originality and appropriateness as opposed to artistic creativity (Kesler 2015). Without perseverance social changes would remain unrealized because of the long planning, decision-making and implementation span they require. The foundations for the sense of involvement are created by constructive and respectful interaction, or by how we are men to other men.

Involvement and influencing – from social inclusion to civic participation

The role of the higher comprehensive school in the development and implementation of operating models for involvement is invaluable. There is a great difference in the contents and number of lessons in social studies between upper secondary schools and vocational institutions, so it is important that every young person feels that he or she is included in the school community already in the comprehensive school and is able to influence his or her everyday life and immediate environment.

A widely used view of involvement suited to the world of children and young people can be summarised with the help of two dimensions (Kiilakoski and Gretschel 2012). The first dimension of involvement is the social dimension. This is realised when pupils participate in the development of the positive atmosphere in their community by means of campaigns, parties and the planning and implementation of other operating models aimed at enhanced interaction between pupils. The second dimension of involvement is political, meaning participation in common decision-making. The participation in decision-making can be measured in terms of depth, or in which matters one can participate, and in terms of width, or who in the community are allowed to participate in decision-making (Ahonen 2005; Tujula 2017).

In higher comprehensive school at the latest, pupils must also be given a chance to exert influence outside of school. The creation and purposeful building of such opportunities has been confirmed in many sections of the Finnish legislation. For example, the Local Government Ac (410/2015) obligates local governments to hear the local residents in various ways and to set up a youth council. The Youth Act (1285/2016), on the other hand, sets an obligation to hear children and youth in matters relating to them. The Public Libraries Act (1492/2016) obligates libraries to enhance the par-

ticipation of residents. The Basic Education Act (628/1998) confirms for pupils quite extensive opportunities to exert influence in schools. Pupil involvement is one of the cross-cutting principles of the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014). One of the transversal competences focuses particularly on civic skills, collaborative work in schools and outside of schools, as well as on examining the operating models and structures of community and society in accordance with the value basis of basic education.

When processed by our group, the concepts and dimensions described above could be summarised in the form of a Kingis type ice cream bar. The values described in the competences for democracy function as the stick, the chocolate heart consists of competences for involvement and they are surrounded by social inclusion and participation. What about the chocolate glazing? It could be, for instance, the rules and practices agreed with the young people that provide the framework for all activities.
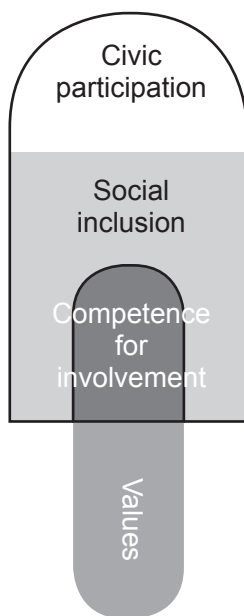

Figure 1. Layers of involvement in higher comprehensive school.

What is done about the matter in schools?

Since involvement and enhancing it are quite strongly included in the curriculum, teachers have already developed excellent models and structures for promoting involvement. In most cases, involvement groups operate around a specific theme, such as environmental agents, peer supporters, peer mediation or a meal council. The best known and most widely used participation channel are probably the student association activities, which are a good mouthpiece as such. However, unfortunately, often the various involvement groups attract a small circle of pupils who already have a strong sense of involvement and who have the basic matters in order in their lives in other ways as well. School communities could consider together with the pupils how children and youths from different starting points could be attracted to join these groups. The boards of student associations have sometimes tested holding open meetings, which all pupils of the school can attend, if they so wish. One solution could also be targeted peer instructor activities, where young people at risk of social exclusion or otherwise struggling with different challenges have a chance to help younger pupils. The experiences of success and positive feedback from acting as peer instructor enhance the competence for involvement as well as social inclusion and engagement in the school community.

Genuine involvement penetrates the everyday life at school and extends beyond the school building as well, into the immediate surroundings and society. Even though involvement is currently one of the hottest trends in the school world, the road towards influential involvement seems rocky. At the moment, the situation is often such that the adults of the school define the limits of everyday involvement, meaning that involvement is easily seen as an opportunity to exert influence on such matters as which will be the colour of the curtains selected for the classroom or whether the pupils will play football or Finnish baseball in the pupils-against-teachers game. When the highpoint of involvement is in such virtual influencing as specified above, the daily life at school and learning too often remain beyond the scope of where pupils can exert influence. The challenge of today and the future is finding the channels and methods by which every member of the school community can be involved in influencing their own everyday lives and learning.

The adults at schools must be sensitive and listen to the initiatives made by the pupils and create channels for bringing them forth and promoting them. The initiatives may be surprising and difficult to implement form an adult's point of view, but for some youngsters such matters as meaningful break activities or an opportunity to participate in recreational activities after the school hours may enable finding a circle of friends and enhance engagement in the school community. It may be particularly difficult to allow pupils on the teachers' own turf, planning of teaching. The first step could be, for example, to let pupils vote on the methods of learning to be used during classes or to listen to the opinions of pupils concerning the selection of evaluation methods to be applied to a course.

Concrete ideas: Actual involvement or practising involvement?

Pupils are given genuine and real opportunities to participate and influence also outside their own school community. The systems of influencing of each local government, events organised by the education system that bring schools together, regional co-operation between local governments or national events are places where pupils of a school can exert influence and practise their skills relating to exerting influence.

Pupils can also practise influencing and participation in the immediate surroundings of their own school. For example, pupils from certain schools have gone to a local assisted living facility to read newspapers for the elderly residents or, in handicrafts, they have made toys for cats held in an animal rescue centre. What kind of participation and operating as an active citizen could collaboration with the local library promote? What kind of opportunities does the local government offer for participation of young people in municipal decision-making? Could a school be active, when a local government is developing different methods for hearing the voice of children and young people? How is the co-operation between the municipal youth council and school managed? Inclusion can also be promoted by following in the media what is happening in the near areas and the municipality. Could the school set up a team of influential pupils who would follow what is happening in the near community and the municipality and communicate about that to other youngsters? What kind of opportunities do social media, blogging, vlogging and other social media channels favoured by young people offer for learning, influencing and participation? Could an

influencing project targeting a matter of importance for pupils be implemented as part of a multidisciplinary learning module? It could be related to traffic safety, opportunities to practise recreational activities or enabling a summer job for many young people with various municipal measures. Hopefully, places where young people can feel involved or exert influence can be found also in recreational and pastime activities for young people, or in activities organised by parishes.

Schools should examine how learning and the contents of the curriculum could be linked to 'real' matters outside the school, turning involvement into real influencing instead of just playing that one can exert influence. Therefore, we would like to challenge schools to reflect on involvement and influencing as part of a pupil's school-day and timetable, either during classes or as separate, multidisciplinary entities.

What would happen if there was one weekly hour of influencing offered in higher comprehensive school?

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Sari Halavaara and Juha-Pekka Lehtonen[11]

HARNESSING THE POWER OF STUDENTS FOR FIXING FINLAND

The common social studies course for all upper secondary schools (YH01 Finnish Society) provides excellent opportunities for examining current phenomena and for social activities. Unfortunately, social studies teaching has traditionally consisted of organisation charts and process descriptions, even though it should aim at influencing in civic society. The attempts to create participatory social studies teaching often stumble to the fact that school is considered a place for theoretical learning and studying. In other words, the school provides and enforces an image of society as a system that is already complete, there being no reason to change it.

Even though changes have taken place in the social studies pedagogy over the past few decades, the transformation of teaching traditions in upper secondary schools has been slow. Studies support this view, since young Finnish people are well aware of the contents of the subject, but many students lack the relevant skills and the understanding related to them. It naturally requires knowledge to grow into an active citizen and to enhance involvement in the operating culture of upper secondary school, but that also requires skills to operate in a civic society. This, on the other hand, calls for the use of student-centred working methods in such a manner that students are challenged to take a stand on social phenomena.

Challenge-based learning in social studies

'Fixing Finland' is a project being implemented on the 'Finnish Society' course taken by all students at the Olari Upper Secondary School in Espoo. The project is based on Challenge-Based Learning, where solutions are being sought to social challenges related to real life. The goal is that the chosen challenges would arise from the own interests of the students and be close to their everyday lives. When students personally approach these concrete challenges using collaborative working methods, we can, at the same time strengthen the operating culture of self-leadership in the upper secondary school.

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11 Sari Halavaara, Teacher of history and social studies, Olari Upper Secondary School, Espoo.
Juha-Pekka Lehtonen, Teacher of history and social studies,
Olari Upper Secondary School, Espoo.

The project is launched with a collaborative brainstorming session, held on the first class of the course, where the students strive to find as many things as possible that make Finland the world's best country. Background for such discussion can be found in the Newsweek article from 2010 and, as the latest addition, the UN World Happiness Report from 2018, where Finland holds the top position as the happiest country in the world. It is easy for the students to find the benefits of the Finnish society by comparing Finland to the rest of the world.

The brainstorming session continues with searching the negative sides of the Finnish society. Mapping the weaknesses and threats has turned out to be a demanding exercise, because it requires that students delve deeper into news items and current affairs. The news sites give students stimuli, and their own interests guide them to find a topic that they will study further.

The project is carried out collaboratively in teams of four that have been formed during the brainstorming phase. The objective is to create dynamically operating groups. In traditional team work, it often happens that each member performs only the part of the work assigned to him or her. In dynamic teams, on the other hand, students share competences, and everyone participates in every phase of the project. This increases engagement in the project, but it also requires joint responsibility, trust and communication. As their first task, team members often set up a social media group of their own and share files, since they do not have enough time to finish everything during class.

The teams operate in a self-directed manner, but the students are not left on their own devices. The teacher's role is to act as a facilitator, who helps the team to figure out where the problem lies when the project is not proceeding. At first, the teams implement their projects during class, which gives the teacher a chance to observe how the groups are operating. At this point, the teacher can help the teams with getting started and adopting good working practices.

The first product prepared by the teams is a video lasting a few minutes, where the team identifies the challenge and the key social issues related to it. The video creates a big idea of the phenomenon. It is argumentative and aimed at convincing the other teams on the same course that the issue indeed poses a significant social challenge.

Making a video links together the key skills of a digital citizen. The stu-

dents search the media flow and critically analyse the news coverage and writings they find there. In addition, the teams select for themselves the applications that best allow them to create digital contents. The media and technology skills are thus naturally brought together, when their use is learned through practice. It is no longer a question of e-learning specifically, but simply learning.

Socially aware citizen as researchers

Once the challenge has been identified, it is then approached in a more analytic and solution-oriented manner. If the scope of the subject is wide at first, it must be narrowed down by determining a specific angle to the topic under study. After this, students can generate sets of questions that will guide their search for a solution, in the style: what does the challenge derive from, or what kind of consequences does the phenomenon have for society and individuals?

Someone has already proposed solutions to practically every challenge, so it is the student's business to find out what people have already attempted to do to solve the challenge and what kind of solutions have been suggested before. The students are encouraged to assess these efforts critically and to create their own views of contradictory and value-laden approaches. This phase of the work will acquaint the students with the views and activities of political parties, NGOs and pressure groups.

Surveys are a key method used in social research. During the project, the students also prepare their own survey related to the subject under study. The surveys will be implemented using Google Forms, and for delivery the students will use the Whatsapp groups created by the student association. The key objective of this exercise is to teach the students to plan survey forms and to analyse the graphs they prepare of the quantitative material collected. It is also interesting to compare the information collected to the results of similar national surveys.

Finally, the teams draw up an action plan. Regarding that, it is important to find out who is or who are ultimately responsible for having the challenge solved. To figure out at what level of social decision-making process decisions concerning the challenge are made and what methods can be employed to have it solved the students need knowledge about how society works. Such information and contents are what constitute the core of a

social studies course. Even more important than that are the bold initiatives that students take.

Final results and their analysis

Finally, the teams present the results of their work to each other. In the presentation, the electronic presentation tools do not play the main role, but the decisive factor is the expertise of each team and their ability to communicate their findings to an audience. The final results of each team will be subjected to the criticism of the whole group. Peer evaluation plays a key role when the students present the results of their projects. The best presentations raise lively debate, and the teams can bring up knowledge that may not have come up in the actual presentation.

From the teacher, evaluating a 'Fixing Finland' type of project requires a new approach. The easiest part of the evaluation process is assessing the final results of each team project, or how deep into the matter the team has delved when examining the challenge and searching a solution for it. In addition, the teacher can also evaluate the effectiveness of the video and the validity of the survey questions the team used in its own study.

The hardest part is assessing the actual work process. The teacher's role is important at the beginning of the project, when the students learn correct working methods. Self-directed work, on the other hand, mostly takes place hidden from the teacher's observing eyes, even though the students always have a chance to ask for help. In practice, however, the students may not take advantage of the help offered even to a sufficient degree. The best method for evaluating the actual process is self-assessment. When reflecting on their own activities and the operation of their team in terms of division of duties and use of time, the students learn project management skills.

The future plans include presenting the team work as a seminar on the evaluation day of the course, to be held during the evaluation week. Representatives from the world of politics and NGOs would also be present, giving their own contribution to the presentation of student projects as commentators.

Ideas for the development of citizenship education

The feedback students have given on challenge-based working methods has been positive, which has encouraged us to develop the project fur-

ther. However, the periodic division and course structure of non-graded upper secondary school teaching has turned out to constitute an obstacle to product development. The course project is being prepared throughout the course, and the intensive working phase lasts seven weeks. The project work produces good, feasible and innovative ideas that the students should also be able to apply in practice. However, in terms of time, a single course during upper secondary school education does not provide opportunities for implementing the plans or for performing concrete democracy experiments.

The scope of social education is wide and the joint course for all upper secondary school students has its own prioritised contents that cannot be put aside. Thematic studies in upper secondary school, co-operation between subjects or phenomenon-based teaching weeks could offer opportunities for practical implementation of the 'Fixing Finland' project. From the point of view of upper secondary school students, any extracurricular activities are often regarded as a burden, so the activities should be a natural part of upper secondary school studies.

Civic activity could also be a totally separate applied course or a study module that could also be performed, for example, by doing voluntary work in an NGO or in collaboration with a third-sector operator. Some upper secondary schools in Finland have already implemented this kind of study trials.

The most certain way of developing civic-mindedness and a sense of social involvement is through personal practical experience. Values and attitudes are learned with the heart and not by cramming theoretic knowledge about matters. The more challenges a democracy is facing, the more important growing into an active citizen is. Young people not voting is no longer the only challenge, but challenges also arise from such issues as populism and alternative truths as well as the feeling of deprivation deriving from social exclusion. The new upper secondary school is not the only place where experiences of involvement and exerting influence are needed; such experiences are needed widely throughout the whole upper secondary education system.

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Matti Rautiainen (ed.)

TOWARDS A BETTER DEMOCRACY

Democracy is always in motion. It is our way of life, and we should nurture and advance it together. In 2016, the Council of Europe defined 20 competences for democratic culture that lay the foundation of a democratic way of life. They provide us with a model for developing and reviewing our actions and our understanding of what democracy means. This book examines the current state of democracy and how it is developed in education and teaching in Finland from the perspective of the competences for democratic culture, and outlines directions that take us towards a better democracy.

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ