

Learning and Teaching Package 6

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Foundations for teacher educators, primary and secondary school teachers.

Teacher Academy Project
DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
Co-funded by the European Union

LTP 6 aims to ensure education is accessible and representative by promoting respect, empathy, and intercultural dialogue. It places particular emphasis on recognising and critically reflecting on power relations within educational and societal contexts, encouraging young people to question whose voices are heard, whose perspectives are marginalised, and how inequalities are reproduced. At the same time, it seeks to strengthen both individual and collective agency by empowering young people to actively participate, express their identities, and shape inclusive learning environments. By fostering awareness of diversity alongside the capacity to act, LTP 6 supports the development of equitable, participatory spaces that contribute to individual and collective well-being.

Democratic Citizenship Education Goals of LTP 6:



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1. Why Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging for Democratic Citizenship Education?

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging is a critical cornerstone of democratic education because a true democracy cannot function if its citizens do not know how to engage across differences or if entire segments of the population are excluded from the democratic process. In essence, Democratic Citizenship Education and DEIB share a commitment to human dignity, equity, participation and social justice.

Educating for democracy is not just about teaching how politics and society work, it is about preparing individuals to participate in a pluralistic society. These democratic goals cannot be learned only through textbooks - they must be experienced in daily school practice. That is why DEIB is essential to educating for democracy. There are four related and important arguments why DEIB needs to be incorporated into general education:

1. Reflecting the Reality of a Pluralistic Society

Democracy thrives on multiple viewpoints. Classrooms are naturally diverse spaces, and empirical research highlights that student diversity in secondary education reshapes learning dynamics in ways that require intentional pedagogical responses. If educational systems fail to acknowledge this reality and principally teach the history, values, and perspectives of the dominant culture, they fail to prepare students for the world they will encounter. This can be addressed by encouraging:

- **Broader Perspectives:** Incorporating diverse voices ensures students understand that there is no single, monolithic "citizen" experience.
- **Critical Thinking:** Exposure to different backgrounds challenges assumptions, helping students develop the critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate policies and political arguments.

2. Ensuring Equitable Political Agency

For a democracy to be legitimate, all citizens must feel they have the agency to participate. Historically, marginalized groups have faced systemic barriers to voting and civic engagement. Addressing these barriers requires recognizing that fairness in education is not just about treating everyone the same (*equality*); it is about ensuring everyone receives what they need to actually access learning and belonging (*equity*). Agency and the confidence to participate can be developed by:

- **Empowering the Marginalized:** Equitable education actively identifies and dismantles these barriers by teaching all students - regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, or ability - that their voices matter and that they have a

right to shape their government; while recognising and strengthening their existing knowledge, agency and forms of participation.

- **Closing the Civic Opportunity Gap:** Low-income and minority students can unfortunately receive fewer high-quality civic learning opportunities. Prioritizing equity ensures that civic tools and knowledge are distributed more fairly.

3. Fostering the Skills for Democratic Deliberation and Participation

Inclusion is about more than just inviting diverse people into the room; it is about creating an environment where they can actively participate. By establishing *psychological safety* and *naming power differences*, classrooms ensure that discussions are not dominated only by the most confident or socially privileged voices. This necessity becomes particularly striking in everyday classroom interactions—from group work to debates on complex societal issues: if a teacher merely applies formal *equality* by giving everyone equal speaking time, existing power dynamics remain unchecked, leaving marginalized or language-constrained students feeling exposed or silenced. Conversely, when DEIB structures—such as anti-stereotyping norms and scaffolded participation—are embedded, democratic dialogue becomes genuinely open, allowing students to directly experience democratic fairness in practice. These essential deliberative skills are developed through opportunities for:

- **Civil Discourse:** A healthy democracy requires the ability to disagree agreeably. When classrooms prioritize inclusion, students can learn how to listen to opposing views with empathy and respect.
- **Collaboration:** Students practice building consensus with peers who have different life experiences, a skill directly transferable to public and political life.

4. Cultivating Belonging to Counter Polarization

Belonging is the feeling of being secure, recognized, and accepted as a full member of a community. Empirical findings across European educational settings, such as studies on German school environments, confirm a strong connection between the perceived quality of school life, a positive classroom climate, and students' commitment to democratic values (Diedrich, 2006). High political polarization and social fragmentation threaten modern democracies and can alienate and produce a lack of belonging. This can be tackled by providing opportunities and experiences that emphasise:

- **Shared Stakes:** When students feel a sense of belonging in their educational and civic institutions, they experience themselves as valued members of a community while questioning its practices, challenging injustice and advocating change.
- **Combating Alienation:** If individuals feel rejected by their society, they are more likely to disengage from democratic processes or turn toward extremist,

anti-democratic movements. Belonging anchors them to the shared democratic project.

Therefore, LTP 6 aims to follow several **core objectives for DEIB-informed democratic citizenship education**:



- value diverse and intersecting identities;
- critically examine assumptions, power and dominant norms;
- recognise and challenge discrimination and racism;
- practise inclusive dialogue, democratic disagreement and conflict resolution;
- strengthen belonging, voice and democratic agency;
- transform classroom and school practices through collaborative action.

2. What do we understand by DEIB in TAP - DCE?

Diversity: Diversity is the wide range of attributes within a person, group or community which makes them distinctive. Dimensions of diversity consider that each individual is unique and recognizes individual differences including: ethnic origins, gender (identity, expression), sexual orientation, background (socio-economic status, immigration status or class), religion or belief, civil or marital status, family obligations (i.e., pregnancy), age, and disability (UNESCO, 2017). Diversity also concerns experiences, perspectives, languages, knowledge, social positioning and ways of participating.

Acknowledging and reflecting varied identities

Equity: Equity is the fair treatment and access to equal opportunity (justice) that allows the unlocking of one's potential, leading to the further advancement of all peoples. The equity pursuit is about the identification and removal of barriers to ensure the full participation of all people and groups. The UNESCO further differentiates between equity and equality: Equity vs equality (in education) refers to the distinction between providing all students with the same resources (equality) and ensuring that resources are allocated based on individual needs to achieve fair outcomes (equity).

Ensuring fairness

Inclusion: Inclusion is the continuous process of transforming institutional cultures, structures, and practices to ensure that all individuals can participate meaningfully, access equal opportunities, and be recognized as valued members of the community. Rather than requiring individuals to assimilate into existing structures, inclusion actively identifies and removes systemic barriers to foster a sense of genuine belonging and equitable agency (Reich, 2012).

Inclusive education: An approach that values diversity and aims to afford equal rights and opportunities to everyone. In the area of education, inclusive policies aim 'to allow all learners to achieve their full potential by providing good quality education to all in mainstream settings with special attention to learners at risk of exclusion and underachievement by actively seeking out to support them and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners, including through individualised approaches, targeted support and cooperation with families and local communities' (European Commission, 2018, p. 15).

Creating environments for all to participate, and succeed

Belonging: Belonging talks about the emotional and psychological aspects of community membership. McKenzie-Delis (2019) says about belonging, that it "is about feeling seen, heard and accepted; knowing that you matter as an essential part of a team, and knowing that you can be your authentic self, without consequence." Strayhorn (2019) highlights that

a sense of belonging emerges when individuals feel valued, respected, and integral to a group. Importantly, a sense of belonging to a group or community is directly connected to civic-mindedness - an awareness of other people in the group, an awareness of the effects of one's actions on those people, solidarity with the other members of the group, and a sense of civic duty towards the group (RFCDC, Volume 1).

Feeling respected, accepted, valued

3. Connecting DEIB Principles to Democratic Competencies

Drawing on these definitions, the table below represents the key objectives of LTP6 coming from the DEIB perspectives for DCE. These ground on two underpinning Frameworks which will be discussed in the next section:

- *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC, CoE, 2016).* The RFCDC provides a systematic basis for teaching, learning and assessing competences needed to promote human rights, democracy, the rule of law and peaceful coexistence in culturally diverse societies.
- *LifeComp: The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence (European Commission, JRC, 2019).* LifeComp connects personal and social development with social inclusion, civic participation and democracy.

Focus	Description	Key Competencies
Valuing cultural diversity (values)	- Promotes appreciation of cultural variety as essential for democratic societies. - Recognizing cultural differences as enriching rather than divisive, promoting tolerance, mutual understanding, and dialogue across perceived differences.	➢ Openness to cultural otherness ➢ Empathy ➢ Respect ➢ Inclusion
Analytical and Critical thinking (skills)	-Ability to systematically analyse information, arguments, and experiences while making reasoned judgments. -Promoting evidence-based evaluation, logical problem-solving, and reflection on biases, distinguishing facts from opinions, and assessing validity	➢ Logical analysis ➢ Evidence evaluation ➢ Self-reflection ➢ Critical Thinking, Problem solving ➢ Bias detection and Equity judgement (DEIB principles)
Knowledge of self (Knowledge and critical understanding)	-Foster understanding of one's own identity (e.g., gender, ethnicity, values), emotional states, and cognitive processes, including how these shape perceptions and interactions.	➢ Self-reflection; Identity awareness ➢ Self-regulation

	-Recognizing personal biases, assessing emotional impacts on decisions, and linking self-knowledge to broader social roles.	
Knowledge of the world (knowledge and critical understanding)	-Acquiring and critically evaluating factual knowledge about societal systems, cultural dynamics, and global issues -assessing media reliability, understanding intercultural relations	➢ Global and cultural awareness; Media literacy; Intercultural knowledge ➢ Managing complexity ➢ Global Equity understanding

? **The following reflective** questions should help you follow the introduced concepts and connect them with your own educational context.

Understanding diversity
➢ Which dimensions of diversity are most visible in your educational context? Which are less visible or rarely discussed?
➢ How might different aspects of your students' identity interact and shape their educational experience?
➢ How can diversity become a resource for learning rather than only a topic to be discussed?
Understanding equity
➢ What is one example from your practice in which equality and equity would require different responses?
➢ What institutional or classroom barriers prevent some learners from participating fully?
Understanding inclusion
➢ Are students expected to adapt to existing educational practices, or are practices adapted in response to students?
➢ In which activities can all students participate meaningfully, rather than merely being present?
➢ How are students and families involved in inclusion and support decisions?

Understanding belonging
➢ When have you personally experienced a strong sense of belonging in a learning or professional community? What made it possible?
➢ What is the difference between being accepted, being included and feeling that one belongs?
➢ What everyday practices communicate to young people that *they* matter?
Valuing cultural diversity
➢ How can openness, empathy and respect be translated into concrete classroom practices?
➢ Do you approach cultural difference primarily as something to celebrate, understand, manage or question?
Analytical and critical thinking
➢ How can you help young people identify stereotypes, assumptions and bias in conversations, information, arguments and educational materials?
➢ Whose perspectives and interests are reflected in the information young people encounter?
➢ How do young people distinguish evidence, interpretation and opinion?

4. What Frameworks enrich the understanding of DEIB in TAP -DCE?

Along the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture discussed in LTP 1, we use LifeComp: the European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence, developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, as a complementary framework for LTP 6. Within LTP 6, the RFCDC provides the principal framework for understanding democratic values, attitudes, skills and critical knowledge. LifeComp complements it by highlighting the personal, social and learning competences that support dialogue, collaboration, wellbeing, reflective learning and participation.

LifeComp comprises nine competences within three areas:

LifeComp area	Competences	Relevance to DCE and DEIB
Personal	Self-regulation Flexibility Wellbeing	Supports self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience and the capacity to participate in challenging conversations
Social	Empathy Communication Collaboration	Supports dialogue across differences, inclusive participation, relationship-building and collective decision-making
Learning to learn	Growth mindset Critical thinking Managing learning	Supports reflection on assumptions, examination of bias, openness to change and learner agency

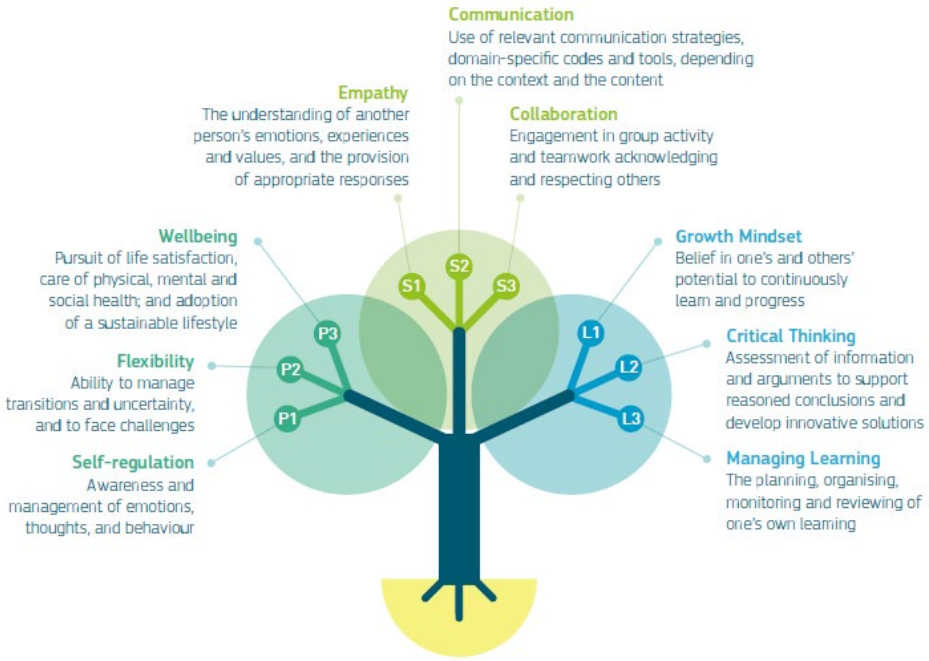


Figure 1 LifeComp Competence areas and competences. Source: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7d9c9dcd-bf31-11ea-901b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en?utm_source=chatgpt.com

5. LTP 6 Themes and Methodologies: What to expect?

The DEIB-informed Democratic Citizenship Education serves multiple critical functions: it aims to combat educational inequalities, promote social justice, foster intercultural competence, challenge systemic discrimination, and prepare young people to navigate complex, diverse societies. In the previous sections we discussed the key objectives, frameworks and competences relevant for LTP 6. This section aims to provide an overview of the themes or modules within the LTP and the methodologies which would be important for the design of LTP 6 content, resources and approaches.

LTP 6 Methodological Approaches

Critical Pedagogy of Multicultural Incorporation

- Regular school practices that visibly acknowledge students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., mother-tongue moments, cultural sharing routines)
- Ensuring curricula, texts, images and examples reflect the diversity present in the class and society

Dialogic Pedagogy

- Structured discussions where students learn to listen, argue respectfully and consider multiple perspectives
- Teaching students how to dialogue, not just discuss; emphasizing listening, turn-taking and co-construction of meaning.

Culturally responsive teaching

- Making cultural diversity visible in everyday practice
- Art-based activities, such as creative writing, drama, improvisational theatre, dance, music etc.

Whole School Approach

- Community partnerships, leadership activities, out-of-school engagement activities
- Activities involving teachers, pupils and their families to build trust and foster belonging

Transformative Pedagogy

- Schools use cultural diversity as a resource instead of treating it as a problem to manage
- Identifying issues, planning how to tackle the issues, acting and reflecting

Inquiry-Based Learning and project-based / challenge-based learning

- Pupils investigate through projects / challenges cultural differences and commonalities

The described methodological approaches would be relevant for each theme, but you can explore more concrete methods and examples within each theme.

Theme 1. Creating critical consciousness for cultural diversity around us and applying the insights

Classrooms are diverse communities in which learners bring multiple identities, languages, experiences, perspectives, abilities and forms of knowledge. This diversity is not limited to cultural heritage or migration background; it also includes gender, socioeconomic background, family structure, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation and other visible and less visible dimensions of identity. Understanding identity and diversity provides a foundation for participating in a pluralistic democracy. Young people may develop openness to different perspectives while recognising that no person or group represents a single, fixed way of living or thinking.

Through activities such as identity maps, identity flowers or classroom diversity maps, learners can explore what they share with others while also recognising and valuing differences. The purpose is to show that identities are multiple, dynamic and intersecting.

Activities should create opportunities for voluntary self-expression without requiring young people to disclose personal information. They should help examine how identities shape experiences and perspectives, question stereotypes and recognise diversity within social and cultural groups.

Key questions



What assumptions might we make about someone based on one aspect of their identity?
How can difference enrich our shared learning?
What helps people feel recognised without requiring them to conform?

Related Frameworks

LifeComp: Empathy; communication; collaboration; flexibility.

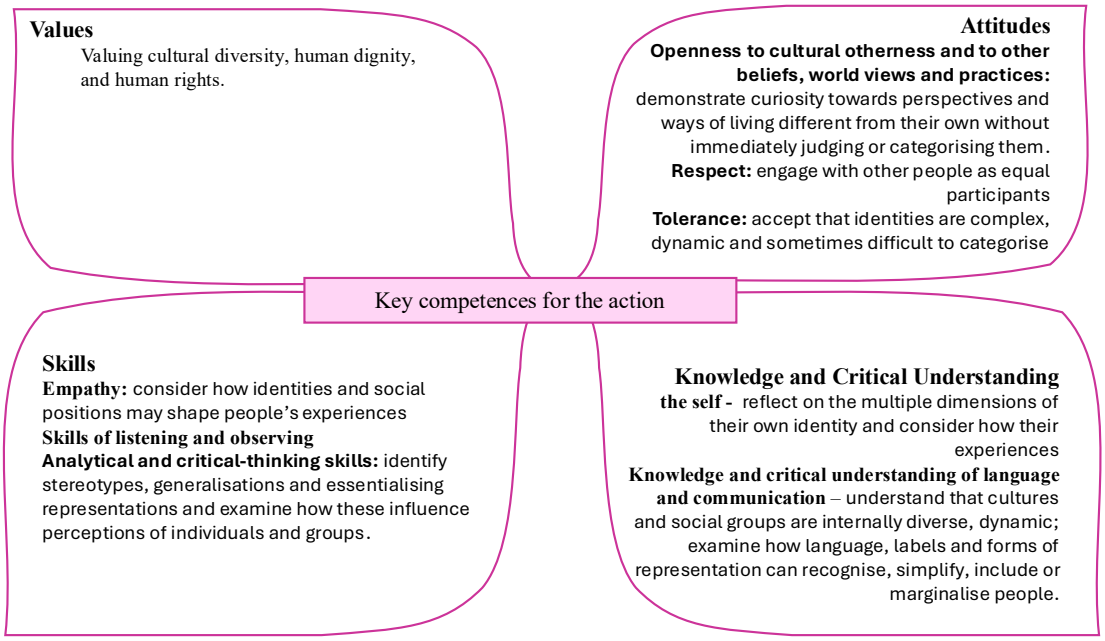
Key Competences in relation to RFCDC

Values: Valuing cultural diversity, human dignity, and human rights.

Attitudes: Openness to cultural otherness, respect, tolerance of ambiguity.

Skills: Analytical and critical thinking, empathy

Knowledge & Critical Understanding: Critical understanding of self, language, communication, and cultural diversity.



Methodological Steps	
Title	**Daily reflection rounds**
Description	Short, structured 5-to-10-minute routines that provide regular opportunities for learners to reflect on their experiences, listen to others and shape classroom life. Rather than addressing issues only when problems arise, daily rounds make equity, psychological safety, and belonging continuously visible. A round may take five to ten minutes and use one carefully selected prompt. Responses can be spoken, written, drawn, submitted digitally or represented through a colour, or symbol, one word or one picture Depending on the classroom dynamic, formats can vary between oral *Talking Circles* (with a clear right to pass), *Think–Pair–Share* exchanges, structured *Three-Part Rounds* (*"I noticed… I appreciated… I suggest…"*), to low-stakes *Classroom Pulse* ratings (evaluating safety or belonging), and *Anonymous Exit Notes* to remove pressure when feedback involves power dynamics. Possible prompts include: • *What helped you participate today?* • *When did you feel that your idea was heard?* • *What made learning difficult?*

	• *What perspective changed your thinking?* • *Was there a moment when participation felt unequal?* • *What should we continue, stop or change tomorrow?*
Relevant Link	DeGeDe Toolbox (language: German)
Title	**Embodied Awareness and Non-Verbal Communication in the Classroom**
Description	Body-language games (*e.g., Mirroring, Emotion Statues*) help learners explore communication, interpret emotions, and examine power dynamics without relying solely on spoken language. Working in pairs or groups fosters trust, empathy, and non-verbal participation.
Title	**Identity flower**
Description	A visual mapping exercise where learners write their name in the centre of a flower and fill its petals with self-selected identity facets (*e.g., languages, values, communities, places, roles, interests, hopes*). It illustrates that identity is complex, multidimensional, and impossible to reduce to a single category such as nationality, gender, language or disability. Learners should choose their own categories.
Relevant Link	Council of Europe
Title	**Cross-Generational Community Inquiry**
Description	Student-led team research using family interviews, folktales, songs, photographs, or recipes to explore how traditions travel across generations. This positions family and community members as valued knowledge holders while building research and listening skills.
Title	**Inclusive Intercultural Food Festival**
Description	A collaborative festival involving pupils, families, and teachers through shared cooking and storytelling. Rather than reducing culture to "typical national dishes," it explores food as dynamic, personal, and evolving through migration, economic, trade, geography, and family history.
Title	**Experiential & Digital Storytelling**
Description	Multimedia projects (*e.g., Photovoice, Digital Narratives, Reflection Journals*) where learners create personal or researched stories using images, audio, and text. It enables learners to communicate in different modes and to become creators of representations rather than only consumers of them. Possible prompts include: • Where, when or with whom do I experience belonging? • What makes a place feel welcoming?

	• Whose stories are missing from our school? • How might the same school space be experienced differently by someone else? • What would a more inclusive classroom look and feel like?
Relevant Links	Living Democracy's material on • Diversity • Identity Toolkit for a Democratic and Inclusive School Culture

Theme 2. Identifying and Responding t o Discrimination and Racism

Racism and discrimination are not peripheral or historical issues in Europe. Racism and discrimination remain significant challenges across Europe, including within educational institutions. Data from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights show increasing experiences of racial discrimination among people of African descent and Muslims (FRA 2024), persistent racist bullying in schools, high levels of harassment affecting Roma, Traveller, Jewish and LGBTIQ young people, and very low rates of formal reporting (CoE, 2025). Council of Europe monitoring also continues to identify school segregation and unequal educational opportunities, particularly affecting Roma pupils.

Activities celebrating languages, food, traditions and cultural heritage can build curiosity and connection, but they do not necessarily help learners understand why some identities are socially privileged while others are marginalised. A school may celebrate cultural diversity while maintaining unequal educational pathways, biased representation or inadequate responses to racist incidents.

Therefore, this theme aims to enable young people and educators to recognise and critically examine discrimination and racism in everyday interactions, educational materials, institutional routines and wider society. It introduces distinctions between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism, while showing how these processes are interconnected.

The objectives are to foster critical thinking to recognise discriminatory situations, analyse the role of power and institutional conditions, practise responding safely and develop actions that support more equitable educational environments.

Key questions

How do differences become connected to unequal treatment, opportunity and power - and what responsibilities do we have when this happens?

Through age-appropriate examples and activities, learners explore key concepts such as **stereotypes**, **prejudice**, and both **direct and indirect discrimination** *(see Glossary for detailed definitions)*

Related Frameworks

LifeComp - Empathy; critical thinking, communication; collaboration; wellbeing; critical thinking.

TAP-DCE DEIB focus - stereotype and bias recognition; intersectional awareness; power analysis; equity-oriented judgement; critical examination of representation; solidarity and collective agency.

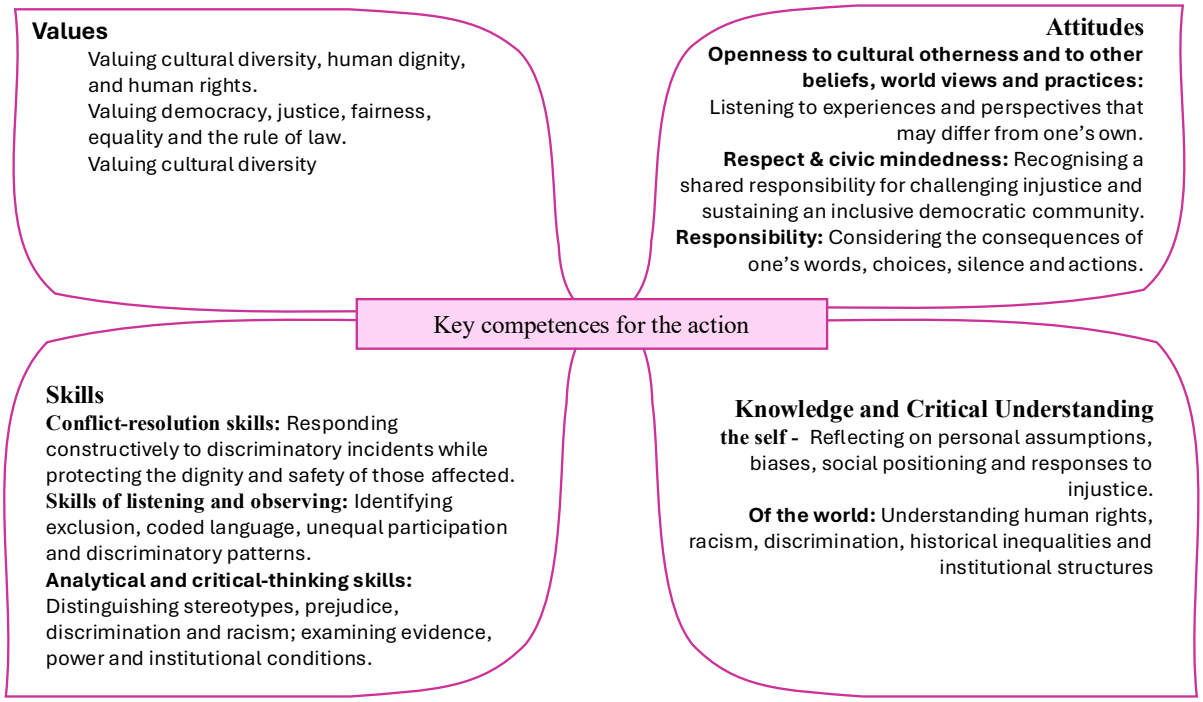
Key Competences in relation to RFCDC

Values: Valuing human dignity, human rights, justice, fairness, and equality.

Attitudes: Openness to cultural otherness, respect, responsibility, civic-mindedness.

Skills: Analytical and critical thinking, conflict-resolution, cooperation.

Knowledge & Critical Understanding: Critical understanding of politics, law, human rights, power relationships, and social justice.



Methodological Steps	
Title	**Scenario-based learning**
Description	Students receive scenarios and consider whether the practice is intentionally discriminatory, who may be disadvantaged and how it could be redesigned.
Title	**Intention–impact–responsibility analysis**
Description	Students examine a critical incident through three lenses: What might the person or institution have intended? What was the possible impact? What responsibility exists after the impact becomes known?
Title	**Discrimination iceberg**
Description	Students create an iceberg with three levels: **Visible incidents:** insults, slurs, exclusion, harassment or violence; **Less visible practices:** lower expectations, repeated mispronunciation, biased representation, unequal disciplinary responses; **Underlying structures:** curriculum choices, tracking, segregation, inaccessible reporting procedures or unequal access to leadership. The activity shows that visible incidents may be connected to less visible norms and structures.
Title	**Multiple-perspective policy analysis**
Description	Students examine how a school policy may affect different groups. Possible policies include: • language-use rules; • religious clothing or symbols; • school celebrations; • disciplinary procedures; • access to school trips.
Title	**Counter-narrative production**
Description	A project creates a text, podcast, poster, video or digital story that challenges a stereotype or adds a missing perspective. The aim is not to create artificially "positive" stereotypes, but to represent people as complex actors with knowledge, agency and diverse experiences.
Relevant Link	Council of Europe's Compass activities on discrimination and intolerance, its resources for tackling discrimination, Conflict-resolution Toolbox: Creating a Culture of Respect and Empathy

Theme 3. Inclusive Participation, Dialogue and Belonging in the Classroom

Being present in a classroom does not necessarily mean being included in its learning and social life. Participation may be shaped by classroom routines, language expectations, accessibility, peer relationships, teacher expectations and preferred ways of communicating. Some learners may be heard more frequently, given more responsibility or regarded as more capable, while others may participate less visibly or encounter barriers to having their contributions recognised.

With increasing diversity in European classrooms, fostering the participation of all pupils becomes essential. Eurostat data show that a significant proportion of pupils in Europe come from a migrant background (first or second generation) or belong to linguistic and cultural minorities. At the same time, students with migration backgrounds, disabilities, or non-heteronormative identities often face unequal opportunities for participation and achievement (Eurostat, 2024; EC 2026).

Analysing classroom participation makes otherwise hidden patterns visible and helps learners distinguish between equality and equity. It connects empathy with structural reflection: the question is not simply why an individual learner did not participate, but whether the activity offered accessible and meaningful ways for everyone to contribute.

Key questions



- Who participated, and in which ways?
- Whose contributions were acknowledged or influenced the discussion?
- Which forms of participation did the activity privilege?
- What might have made participation more difficult for some learners?
- What could we change so that more learners can contribute meaningfully?

Related Frameworks

LifeComp - Empathy; communication; collaboration; wellbeing; critical thinking.

TAP-DCE DEIB focus - Bias detection and equity judgement

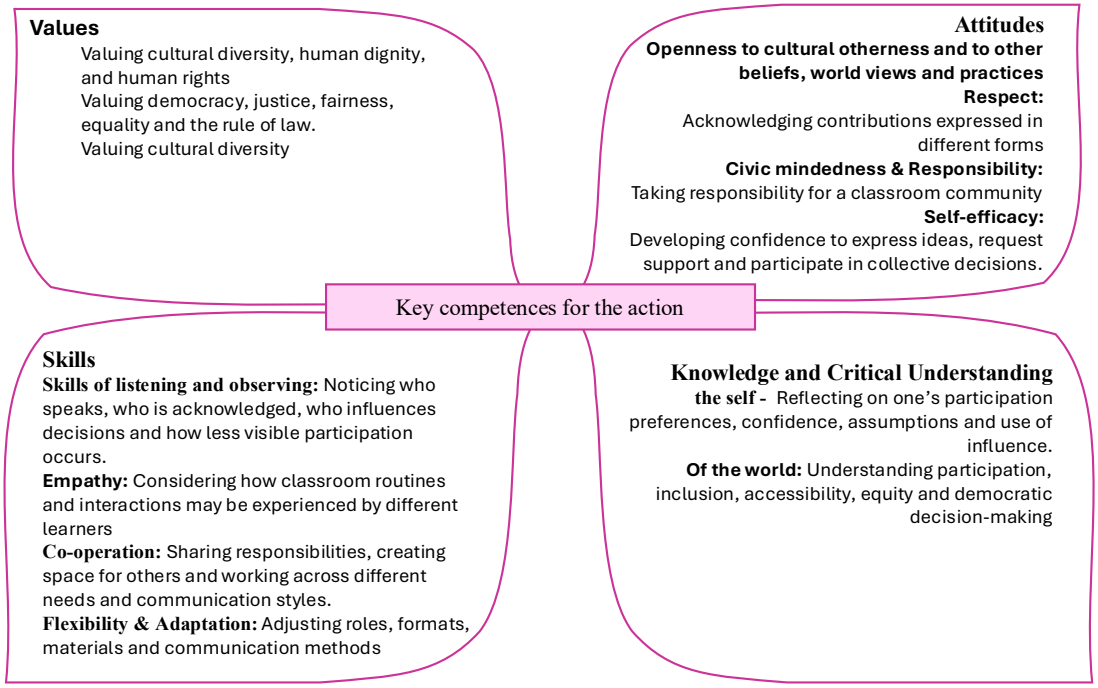
Key Competences in relation to RFCDC

Values: Valuing human dignity, fairness, equality, and democracy.

Attitudes: Civic-mindedness, responsibility, respect, openness, self-efficacy.

Skills: Listening and observing, empathy, cooperation, flexibility and adaptation.

Knowledge & Critical Understanding: Critical understanding of language, communication, power dynamics, and social inclusion.



Methodological Steps	
Title	**The "No-Objection" Voting Method**
Description	Students use a step-by-step systemic consensus model to make inclusive classroom decisions instead of relying on majority rule. Rather than voting "yes" or "no", the class systematically collects arguments, gauges levels of objection - which can be expressed non-verbally through hand signals - and adapts proposals until no student holds a strong, unresolved objection.
Relevant Link	https://degede.de/blog/2025/07/toolbox-diskriminierungskritik-und-schule/ (language: German)
Title	**Statue Theatre: Sculpting Classroom Dynamics**
Description	Students use their bodies as "clay" to build silent freeze-frames (statues) that visualize power relations, belonging, and social inclusion

	A group of students shapes a scene depicting a classroom interaction using postures, eye contact, and spatial distances. The rest of the class acts as observers and analyze the dynamics (identifying power, isolation, or focus), and then step into the scene to physically adjust positions and transform the frame into an equitable, inclusive setting.
Relevant Link	https://www.theaterwerkstatt-heidelberg.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/AA_TP17_IrisSibla.pdf (language: German) ACIIS Project. Workbook Drama for Learning Humanities.
Title	**Multimodal and plurilingual participation**
Description	Learners are offered different but equally valued ways to contribute: orally, in writing, visually, physically, digitally or through different languages.
Title	**Structured dialogue and conflict resolution**
Description	Methods such as listening circles, timed pair exchanges, talking tokens or structured academic controversy. In a conflict, map positions, interests, needs, power differences and possible solutions. Constructive response rehearsal aimed at asking what the speaker means; questioning an inaccurate generalisation; naming why a comment may be harmful; disagreeing without attacking the person.
Relevant links	Council of Europe (2015). Teaching controversial issues.

Theme 4. Justice: Fair Structures, Voice and Repair in Schools.

Justice is the thread that ties diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging together into coherent practice. Section 2 already glosses Equity as "fair treatment and access to equal opportunity (justice)"; this theme unpacks that connection along three dimensions: what a school distributes, who has a voice in deciding it, and how harm is addressed once trust breaks down. A school can look diverse and still be unjust, if opportunities, discipline and decision-making power are distributed unevenly.

Distributive justice concerns who receives access to high-quality teaching, advanced tracks, extracurricular opportunities, and disciplinary leniency or severity. International monitoring (OECD, Council of Europe, EU Fundamental Rights Agency) has repeatedly found that pupils from migrant, Roma, disabled or low-income backgrounds

are disciplined more often and more harshly for comparable behaviour, and tracked more often into lower-status pathways. Naming these patterns is a precondition for addressing them.

Procedural justice asks who has a say. Who has a say in school policy making? Who is consulted? Do the pupils have a voice? Even when schools have formal participation structures for pupils, to what extent do these representative bodies reflect the actual diversity of the school population? These questions are relevant when it comes to shedding a light on the processes in a school. Often the decisions that affect all the pupils are made by a select few, which begs the question whether the effects on all groups were genuinely considered. By utilizing reflection questions and observation tasks for both staff and pupils, schools can analyze who was unconsciously excluded from past decisions (e.g., regarding school trips, project work, or shared spaces) and take proactive steps to prevent recurrence.

Restorative justice reframes how schools respond once harm has occurred. Rather than relying only on punitive, exclusionary discipline (detentions, suspensions, exclusions), restorative approaches ask what happened, who was affected, and what is needed to repair the harm and rebuild relationships.

Consequently, this theme invites teachers and school leaders to examine three interconnected questions in their own school: what is distributed and to whom; who has voice in decisions; and how harm and conflict are addressed and repaired.

Key questions



- Who currently has a say in this decision? Who may be absent from the process, and why?
- Where in your school are opportunities, resources or disciplinary actions distributed unevenly, and along which social lines (background, language, disability, gender)?
- What support might different learners need to participate?
- How can we determine whether participation has been meaningful?
- What would a more equitable decision-making process look like?

Related Frameworks

LifeComp - Communication; collaboration; critical thinking; flexibility, self-regulation

TAP-DCE DEIB Focus - Democratic agency; representation; accessibility; shared decision-making; equitable influence.

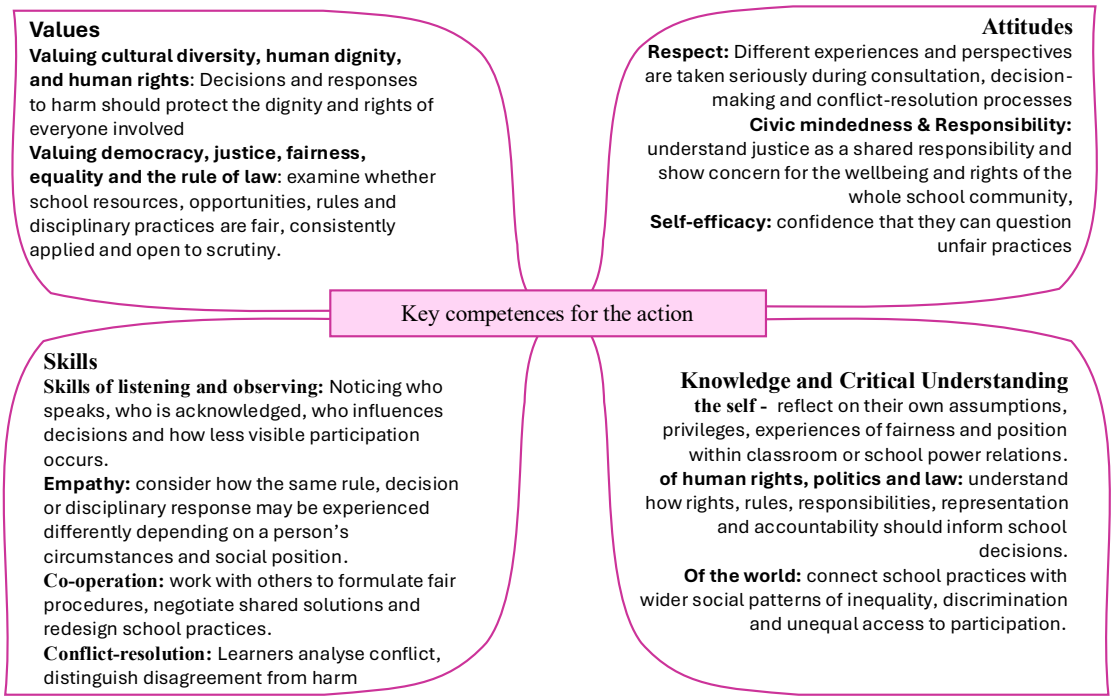
Key Competences in relation to RFCDC

Values: valuing justice, human dignity and the rule of law.

Attitudes: respect, civic-mindedness, responsibility.

Skills: analytical and critical thinking, empathy, conflict-resolution and cooperation.

Knowledge and critical understanding: knowledge and critical understanding of law, politics and the workings of society.



Methodological Steps	
Title	**Perspective-taking: Fairness audit**
Description	Fairness audit of school rules and discipline data: in small groups (staff or pupils), review anonymised discipline data and school rules, asking who is affected by each rule and whether outcomes fall unevenly across groups. Who decides? Mapping participation and procedural justice: using a recent real decision (a trip, a project, a rule change), map who was consulted, who decided, and who was affected but not asked.
Title	**Role Play: Justice Court / Mock Tribunal**
Description	Pupils role-play a tribunal weighing a complex case with competing claims to fairness (*e.g., a resource dispute, a disciplinary appeal, or spatial access*), building critical argumentation and multi-perspectivity.

6. Examples of Practice

Title	**The Living Library ("Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover")**
Nature of the example	Project, Dialogic Pedagogy
Description	A methodology created by the Council of Europe where real people act as "books" that students can "borrow" for structured, small-group conversations. The "books" are individuals from marginalized or stereotyped groups (e.g., refugees, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ* individuals). This biographical storytelling provides a safe space for respectful dialogue, directly challenging stereotypes and fostering reciprocal perspective-taking.
Age Group	Secondary level
Link	https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/living-library

Title	**LFSF - Student-Led Initiatives on Neurodiversity and Belonging**
Nature of the example	**School-wide Initiative**
Description	Rather than treating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) as a stand-alone project or temporary awareness event, LFSF embeds it as an everyday, school-wide commitment across three connected areas: curriculum integration, family engagement, and student-led initiatives. Grounded in an international bilingual community, the school explicitly frames neurodiversity and multilingualism as educational strengths. A key practice involves neurodiversity workshops facilitated directly by neurodivergent students themselves. By

	taking the lead, these peer leaders share authentic insights that help other students realize they are not alone, while peer-led initiatives involving entire families across generations build long-term empathy, trust, and authenticity.
Age Group	Primary and Secondary level
Link	https://www.lelycee.org/about/news/news-post/~board/blog/post/building-awareness-belonging-and-international-understanding-at-the-lyce

Title	**Inclusive Teaching-Learning Spaces: Participatory Classroom (Re)design**
Nature of the example	**Project**
Description	The initiative redefines classroom architecture and spatial organization by centering the perspectives of students, teachers and after-school care staff in the redesign of learning environments. Implemented directly in primary school classrooms (starting as early as 1st grade), the practice enables young learners to articulate their needs, express spatial preferences, and actively co-design their physical learning environment. The approach is based on a review of relevant literature and research on inclusive learning environments, spatial organization, and participatory school development, connecting empirical evidence with the perspectives and experiences of members of the school community. By shifting from top-down classroom setup to co-design, the approach ensures that physical spaces accommodate diverse learning styles, sensory needs, and social dynamics.
Age Group	Primary level
Link	https://tu-dresden.de/zlsb/forschung-und-projekte/inklusion/llr-transfer?set_language=de

7. Challenges and Prerequisites for Supporting DEIB

DEIB work in schools often faces practical, cultural, and structural challenges that slow progress even when staff are committed. To systematically address these obstacles, they can be understood across three interconnected dimensions: personal, institutional, and systemic.

Personal & Interpersonal Level

DEIB work asks educators to examine assumptions, habits, and systems that may feel normal or neutral to them. That reflection can be uncomfortable, especially when it involves race, gender, disability, religion, language, class, or migration background. Some staff welcome the learning process, but others may feel defensive, judged, or tired of constant change. If leaders do not handle this carefully, staff may resist, withdraw, or treat DEIB as a compliance exercise rather than genuine professional growth.

Furthermore, when staff lack a common understanding of DEIB, efforts become fragmented. Some focus mainly on representation, while others emphasize equity, belonging, anti-bias practice, or structural change. Without a common definition, schools can end up with fragmented efforts: one teacher diversifies texts, another revises classroom language, and another focuses on discipline, but these actions do not necessarily connect to a wider vision. The result can be confusion, uneven implementation, and frustration about what "good practice" actually looks like.

Finally, DEIB initiatives frequently rely on a small group of committed individuals carrying the emotional and organizational workload. Without distributed responsibility, adequate resources, professional learning, and long-term commitment these leaders face overextension and burnout, making school-wide progress fragile.

Institutional & Organizational Level

A fundamental obstacle occurs when DEIB is treated as an optional, short-term project rather than a core dimension of school development. When disconnected from curriculum design, policy, assessment, and daily routines, initiatives depend heavily on individual enthusiasm and are easily disrupted by staff turnover or competing priorities.

Teachers manage lesson planning, instruction, grading, meetings, student support and administrative responsibilities. Without dedicated, protected time for collaborative lesson redesign, training, and peer observation, DEIB can feel like an unsustainable burden rather than an essential support for high-quality teaching. Even highly motivated staff struggle to implement inclusive practices when structural time for collaboration and professional learning is missing.

Leadership plays a major role as well. Effective DEIB work needs clear direction, sustained support, and willingness to address difficult issues. If leaders only support DEIB when convenient, staff may see it as temporary. If leaders avoid conflict, they may fail to address exclusionary behaviour or unequal outcomes. But overly top-down approaches can also backfire if staff feel they are being told to comply rather than invited into shared responsibility. Effective leadership balances clarity, accountability, and participation.

Systemic & Societal Level

Schools frequently articulate commitments to inclusion, respect or equality and respect in mission statements that are not fully reflected in institutional structures. The situation in German schools is worth mentioning here. A school may promote belonging while using assessments that disadvantage multilingual learners, or it may value inclusion while allowing biased discipline patterns to continue. Students and staff notice these contradictions quickly. When inclusion language is not backed by visible change, trust weakens and DEIB can seem symbolic rather than meaningful.

Lastly, DEIB work intersects with broader societal debates and local community expectations. Teachers may fear backlash when navigating sensitive topics or challenging traditional norms (*e.g., accommodating minority background students in physical education or swimming*). This tension can lead to self-censorship and watered-down learning experiences. Schools must build strong, transparent partnerships with families to explain how DEIB fosters safety, learning, and fairness for all students.

Possible Supportive Mechanisms

To overcome these interconnected challenges, schools must establish concrete support structures across all three levels. At the individual level, creating low-stakes reflection routines and peer-visitation cycles allows teachers to observe classroom dynamics - such as participation patterns or non-verbal cues - in a safe, non-evaluative environment. Regular Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) serve as a vital mechanism to align staff around a shared vocabulary and equitable practices. For instance, a PLC focusing on fair assessment might bring together teachers across subjects to review anonymized student work, identify where language barriers obscure subject knowledge, and co-design scaffolding tools like multilingual word banks or adapted task prompts. Additionally, establishing cross-departmental working groups distributes ownership evenly across teams, preventing emotional labour from falling on a few individuals.

Schools can build community trust and navigate broader societal debates by hosting low-threshold dialogue formats and partnering with external civil society organizations. Rather than keeping cultural celebrations confined to the school community, initiatives like an Inclusive Intercultural Food Event or a Cultural Heritage Festival can be explicitly paired with critical reflection routines - such as *Photovoice* or identity

storytelling - while inviting local human rights NGOs, community leaders, or migrant advocacy groups to host workshops and facilitate open conversations about structural belonging and anti-bias values. Externally, collaborating with university teacher-training centers, municipal youth services, and established Open Educational Resource (OER) platforms enables schools to draw on validated materials, expert guidance, and long-term institutional support.

8. Glossary

Belonging	Feeling accepted, respected, valued, and safe to bring one's full identity into the community
Bias	An inclination, preference, or prejudice toward or against a particular group, individual, or idea, which can be explicit (conscious) or implicit (unconscious)
Discrimination	Unfair or harmful treatment connected to actual or perceived identity or group membership
Direct Discrimination	Treating someone less favourably explicitly because of an identity characteristic
Indirect Discrimination	Applying an apparently neutral rule that disadvantages particular groups
Diversity	Acknowledging, respecting, and reflecting varied identities and perspectives
Equity	Ensuring fairness by actively removing structural barriers and allocating resources based on individual needs
Inclusion	Transforming institutional structures, cultures, and practices so all can participate meaningfully
Inclusive Education	Creating accessible environments where all learners participate and succeed
Justice	The practice of fairness and dignity through fair resource access (distributive), inclusive decision-making (procedural), and repairing harm (restorative)
Prejudice	A judgement or attitude formed without sufficient knowledge, experience or critical reflection
Racism	Systemic, institutional, and interpersonal structures, beliefs, and practices that assign value and grant privilege based on racial or ethnic origin, resulting in the oppression or marginalization of specific groups.
Stereotype	A simplified and generalised idea about people based on their actual or perceived membership of a group

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