



A Transferable Model for the Development and Assessment of Competences Related to Education for Democratic Citizenship

This model was developed within the ACTA project by the researchers from the University of Craiova, University of Iceland and Bifröst University with a view to designing educational resources for the development and assessment of competences related to education for democratic citizenship (EDC).

Research phases:

1. Selecting a set of relevant competences for EDC

Based on the scientific literature and the results of a survey administered to teaching staff from the three universities involved in the project, the researchers jointly selected the following two relevant competences that lead to EDC: critical thinking and active citizenship.

2. Drawing up and validating the competence description sheets

The researchers from the University of Craiova drew up description sheets for each identified competence. This was done according to the methodology developed by Romanian, French and Italian researchers within a European

Erasmus+ KA 2 project. The competence description sheets were subsequently validated by all the researchers.

3. Drawing up and validating a competence assessment tool

As a basis for the problem-based competence assessment test, the researchers chose a video available online and addressing a highly actual issue of today's society. The test was designed, administered to students in the three universities and validated pursuant to the observations provided by the partners.

Structure of the model:

1. Theoretical outline
2. Critical thinking - competence description sheet
3. Active citizenship - competence description sheet
4. Problem-based competence assessment test
5. Critical thinking - an assessment model
6. Active citizenship - an assessment model



Theoretical Outline

Defining Descriptors

Sharing the opinions of Le Boterf (1994, 2000), Chenu (2005), Coulet (2011), Trincherro (2012) on a situational approach of the notion of competence, we consider that competences – both individual and collective – represent people’s abilities to mobilize and combine resources in a specific manner, depending on the situations they deal with. A proper characterization of such competences requires a distinction between **indicators** – which are *general and applicable to categories of situations* – and **descriptors**, which are *specific to a precise situation*. Being able to act competently in a situation implies having resources and combining them in a relevant and effective manner.¹

¹ This theoretical presentation of competences (definition, indicators, descriptors) was drawn up in the Erasmus+ KA2 strategic partnership for school education *Acteurs du Territoire pour une Éducation à la Citoyenneté Mondiale* (ACTECIM), project number 2015-1-FR01-KA201-015405, implemented during 01/09/2015-31/08/2018 and is excerpted from Tilea, Morin, Duță (2019: 122-124).

*A competence indicator describes the scheme that helps construct a dynamic combination of resources in analogical (but not identical) situations. Thus, for instance, one of the indicators of the area of competence related to critical thinking is “the student recognizes the explicit and implicit meanings of a message, the underlying viewpoints and moral and cultural values”. This indicator applies to diverse problem-based tests. In order to design an educational path identifying the competence levels, the possession of such competence should be measured against precise problem-based tests. The combinations of resources used in the context of a problem-based test represent the achieved performance: they are only the observable part of the used competences, but they are potentially measurable. Therefore, when characterizing competences, one cannot simply state the general indicators of the envisaged competences, but *descriptors* should be detailed, so as to relate*



the achieved performance to a problem-based test-specific measurement scale. Hence, *a descriptor is an indicator associated to the specific content of the problem-based test*: it reports an observation under the form of a statement, using a verb of action.

The RIZA Model. A Follow-up of Resource Mobilization in a Given Situation

Developing a competence in a given situation means to approach not only the resources (personal, social and/or methodological knowledge, competences and capacities), but especially the conditions that help subjects effectively mobilize their resources against a problem-based test, so as to propose effective answers, with full responsibility and autonomy.

Four elements can be defined to characterize the possibility to act effectively in a situation and, hence, the “depth” of the subject’s competence.

- The first element refers to the quantity and quality of held and mobilized resources, in terms of personal, social and/or

methodological knowledge, competences and capacities, as well as to their adequacy to the concerned problem-based test.

- The second element refers to the explicit or implicit models guiding the subject’s interpretation of the issue and the choice of the used strategies. A correct view of the situation allows the subject to choose action strategies that are adapted to the situation and, hence, effective. They will be referred to as *interpretation structures*.

- The third element deals with the concrete operational strategies used to reach the envisaged goals in the presence of a given problem-based test. They are called *action structures*.

- The fourth element consists of the subject’s capacity to measure by himself/herself whether the adopted strategies really are the best, and change them, as the case may be. They are *self-regulation structures*.

These four elements form the R-I-Z-A model: Resources (*Risorse*), Interpretation (*Interpretazione*), Action (*aZione*), Self-Regulation (*Autoregolazione*).



***The R-I-Z-A (Resources-Interpretation-Action-Self-regulation)
competence assessment model***

<i>Element</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>Resources (R)</i>	The subject's knowledge, competences, capacities and attitudes, that s/he may use in a problem-based test.	Knowing Pythagoras' theorem Knowing to calculate the length of the hypotenuse when one has the length of catheti. Being able to persist in searching for a solution to a problem even after an initial failure or for a kind of problem the person has never met before.
<i>Interpretation structures (I)</i>	How the subject "reads", interprets, assigns meaning to the proposed problem-based tests.	Being able to identify that the proposed problem needs to use Pythagoras' theorem. Being able to identify, in the provided data, the ones that are useful to solve the problem and the missing data.
<i>Action structures (Z)</i>	How the subject acts to solve the proposed problem-based test.	Being able to apply Pythagoras' theorem in the proposed situation, to calculate the required unknown variables. Being able to estimate missing data (the height of a balcony and



		the height of the platform of the fire engine) based on previous knowledge.
<i>Self-regulation structures (A)</i>	How the subject reflects on his/her own interpretations and actions, so as to identify strengths and weaknesses and change them, if applicable.	Being able to identify, independently or with the teacher's help, errors and inconsistencies in his/her reasoning. Being able to subsequently reflect on one's own interpretations and actions, so as to propose improvements.



Critical Thinking – Competence Description Sheet

General description

Critical thinking is defined as being “an umbrella term that may be applied to many different forms of learning acquisition or to a wide variety of thought processes” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2016). More specifically, as a cognitive activity, critical thinking is associated with the use of a wide range of mental faculties that enable the individuals to learn and to think critically, analytically and in an evaluative way. By means of mental processes such as observation, classification, selection and assessment, an individual is able to select and assimilate reliable information on the world, and to develop aware and justified positions (Trincheró, 2012).

Many authors consider that critical thinking is, above all, an approach that helps making decisions based on knowledge from reliable sources, with no influence from prejudices or preconceived ideas. Thus, in the view of Jiménez

Aleixandre and Puig (2010), critical thinking includes two articulated elements: on the one hand, rationality, that leads to a quest for tangible proofs by challenging already established facts and, on the other hand, the construction of an independent opinion, based on challenging the viewpoint of the social group the individual belongs to. Critical thinking results from both argumentation and social empowerment. It generally requires investing physical resources (to find the best information sources), as well as mental resources (to analyse, evaluate, synthesize them and produce consistent and demonstrable ideas).

Critical thinking in EDC

Nowadays, in a society in which the technological progress and the new media are changing the way we interact with each other and perceive information and knowledge, the ability to think critically has become more



important than ever before. This has led to a change in paradigm of the whole educational process in which the learners are placed in the centre of the learning processes and are actively responsible for their own learning. In order to ensure a quality education, educational institutions and educators also envisage the development of appropriate skills and competences that would lead to new ways of acting and thinking.

In its most basic expression, critical thinking occurs “when students are analysing, evaluating, interpreting, or synthesizing information and applying creative thought to form an argument, solve a problem, or reach a conclusion” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2016). It is generally defined as “a large and complex cluster of inter-related skills” that are required “to evaluate and make judgements about materials of any kind” (Council of Europe, 2018a:47).

According to the recently published *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, education for democratic

citizenship “is explicitly linked to the ideals of democracy and reflects the principles of human rights” (Council of Europe, 2018a: 15). In the particular case of education for democratic citizenship (EDC), learning is not just a cognitive process, but a process which requires the student to engage with the whole person: intellect, emotions and experiences (Council of Europe, 2018a: 15). In this context, teachers should strive to cultivate and develop the students’ critical, creative and empathetic thinking, which are necessary for their active participation in democratic processes and for training them to become responsible citizens. Critical thinking skills in EDC include abilities to make evaluations and judgements about the validity, accuracy, reliability, acceptability of materials, to generate and elaborate alternative options, to weigh up the pros and cons of available options, to draw results and evaluate processes, to construct arguments and, last but not least, to take action.



Critical thinking indicators in EDC

The student:	The teacher:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the particularities of the authors' thinking system, as it results from their linguistic or visual productions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organizes support activities in order to get the students acquainted with the topic of the problem-based test and facilitates an interdisciplinary approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the meaning of a message and grasps the viewpoint of its author, as well as the moral, cultural and democratic implications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - helps the students to select reliable and relevant information reflecting diverse viewpoints on the topic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to formulate his/her own viewpoint on the topic at stake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provides the students with all the information they need in order to formulate their own opinions in a clear, consistent and structured manner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to justify his/her own viewpoint based on previous knowledge and additional information from other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supports the students to discover and analyse the explicit and implicit meaning of a text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to reflect upon, evaluate and adjust his/her own arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to guide the students in their self-reflective process



Active Citizenship – Competence Description Sheet

General description

Ingeniously defined by the President of the European Economic and Social Committee as “the glue that keeps society together” (EESC 2012: 5), active citizenship refers to people getting involved in their communities and to a sense of civic engagement and democratic participation. Citizens can make their voice heard be the driving force for cultural change, which can then impact the country’s democratic strength, considering that “[a] culture of passivity and apathy – an obedient and docile citizenry – is not consistent with democracy” (EIUL, 2019: 48).

International institutions recognize the importance of active citizenship for social development and cohesion, establishing a wide range of tools to foster it, such as the European Passport to Active Citizenship (EPTAC), which links individual citizens and civil society

organizations to the EU decision-making process.

Active citizenship in EDC

In a global context marked by the need to uphold democracy and human rights, education for democratic citizenship (EDC) has increasingly emerged as a prerequisite for shaping active and responsible citizens for the decades to come. Passive involvement is not enough in a world where democracy is constantly facing new challenges. Active citizenship implies a strong commitment to democratic values such as freedom of speech, freedom of association, human rights, etc., and is, hence, an inextricable component of EDC, because one cannot have democracy without civic engagement or the other way around.

Attitudes associated to active citizenship might seldom be



acquired at home or in the wider community, but it is the responsibility of the educational system to properly foster and advance them. Teachers should nurture and encourage young people to become aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, to commit themselves to democratic values and to get involved in their society. Pupils and students should be provided with opportunities to find out about democratic issues such as intolerance, discrimination, racism or extremism, but not only, and to express their views and proposals on those topics.

Menthe (2012: 73-78) points out that the teaching and learning of democratic citizenship is based on two complementary pillars: democratic processes and practices, such as democratic

decision making within a school or in other fields of the educational process, and democratic values and attitudes, such as human rights, participation, empowerment and integration. Furthermore, as shown in the *Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* (2010: 8, 9), learning in education for democratic citizenship is a lifelong process and it does not stop once the students have left school. Therefore, while the mission of educational professionals can be undertaken by means of concrete, individual activities, a longer-term horizon of action should be envisaged. What teachers should do is to equip the students with the competences they need in order to be active citizens in the long run and contribute to civic and democratic development.



Active citizenship indicators in EDC

The student:	The teacher:
- is able to identify stringent democratic issues at various levels (global, national, local)	- masters project-based pedagogy techniques
- outlines challenges and difficult aspects, identifies guidelines, values and various types of involvement	- is aware of the role of problem-based tests in modern education
- is able to identify, select and interpret reliable and relevant information on the previously identified issues	- holds the means to build problem-based tests focused on education for democratic citizenship
- formulates a clear and structured opinion based on his/her personal experience and knowledge, as well as the specificities of his/her learning territory	- has the ability to identify the tools through which the students may be made aware of the importance of empathetic and efficient communication with the other members of the society they live in
- is able to build up, present and explain a proposal for concrete actions	- organizes activities aimed at fostering democratic values among students
- has the ability to adjust the proposal according to the feedback of his/her peers	
- has the capacity to follow up the implementation of the proposed actions and to assess the concrete outcomes	
- has a sense of empathy that allows him/her to relate and communicate with the others	



“Global Warming” Problem-based Test

Your university is currently involved in an international project on education for democratic citizenship. We kindly ask you to solve the following problem-based test, which will provide information on competences associated with this type of education. It should take aprox. 90 minutes. Thank you!

University

Specialisation

Please watch the following video and answer the questions below (do not write more than 100 words for each answer).

The Guardian, 'Nature can repair our broken climate', say Greta Thunberg and George Monbiot, 19 September 2019

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=511461779628725>

1. In your opinion, to what purpose was this video created? Justify your answer.
2. Greta Thunberg says children should give up their education to protest for their future. Do you agree with her? Motivate your answer referring to your own educational system and your own experience.
3. What are, in your opinion, the most stringent environmental issues that affect your own country nowadays? Explain your choices.
4. Have you ever undertaken any actions for environmental protection? If so, briefly describe them (2 sentences per action).
5. Do you think environmental issues can be solved without international cooperation? Justify your answer.
6. Based on the video you have just watched, the image on the side, as well as previous knowledge and personal experience on the topic, answer the following questions:



Source:

<https://preview.redd.it/6u6o8l9lquq31.jpg?width=640&crop=smart&auto=webp&s=96adf8bad96d0a9f6f09e947ca3f2cd6d13f1573>

a. Whose actions are the most effective to fight climate change – Greta’s or Boyan’s? Motivate your answer.

b. Do you think media is important in the fight against climate change? Motivate your answer and provide examples to support your opinion.



Critical Thinking – An Assessment Model

This evaluation model was based on questions 1, 2 and 6 of the ACTA problem-based test.

Interpretation structures

Level A (advanced)	Level B (intermediate)	Level C (weak)	Level D (non- autonomous)
<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the purpose to which the video was created, distinguishing between topic and purpose - identifies Greta's point of view on the children's involvement in protests for their future and her opinion that such protests are more important than attending formal education, as well as their implications 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the purpose to which the video was created - identifies Greta's point of view on the children's involvement in protests for their future and her opinion that such protests are more important than attending formal education - identifies the complementarity of Greta 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the topic of the video instead of its purpose - identifies Greta's point of view on the children's involvement in protests for their future - identifies Greta and Boyan Slat's actions and chooses between them 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the purpose to which the video was created, with the teacher's guidance - identifies Greta's general point of view on actions against climate change - identifies Greta Thunberg's and Boyan Slat's actions and



<p>- identifies the complementarity of Greta Thunberg's and Boyan Slat's actions and chooses between them, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses</p> <p>- identifies and explains the role of media in conveying Greta Thunberg's messages and in transforming her into a climate icon, supporting the explanation with concrete data (number of YouTube views, Google hits), distinguishing between traditional and new media</p>	<p>Thunberg's and Boyan Slat's actions and chooses between them</p> <p>- identifies and explains the role of media in conveying Greta Thunberg's messages and in transforming her into a climate icon, supporting the explanation with concrete data (number of YouTube views, Google hits)</p>	<p>- identifies the role of media in conveying Greta Thunberg's messages and in transforming her into a climate icon</p>	<p>chooses between them, only if helped by the teacher</p> <p>- identifies the role of media in conveying Greta Thunberg's messages, only if helped by the teacher</p>
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Action structures

Level A (advanced)	Level B (intermediate)	Level C (weak)	Level D (non-autonomous)
<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uses proper logical connectors to express all his/her own opinions - expresses his/her 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uses proper logical connectors to express some of his/her own opinions 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uses logical connectors, but fails to clearly organize his/her 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to structure his/her discourse only if assisted by



<p>own point of view integrating relevant additional information from other sources, approached from a critical and a comparative perspective - is able to support his/her answer with 2 concrete examples from his/her own educational system and his/her own experience - chooses between Greta's or Boyan's actions and draws up an accurate and complete comparative critical analysis - clearly formulates his/her viewpoint regarding the role of media in the fight against climate change, providing concrete, real-life examples</p>	<p>- expresses his/her own point of view integrating relevant additional information from other sources - is able to support his/her answer with 1 concrete example from his/her own educational system and his/her own experience - chooses between Greta's or Boyan's actions and draws up a comparative critical analysis - clearly formulates his/her viewpoint regarding the role of media in the fight against climate change, providing general examples</p>	<p>discourse - expresses his/her own point of view integrating additional information from other sources - is able to motivate his/her answer referring to his/her own educational system and his/her own experience without providing any concrete examples - chooses between Greta's or Boyan's actions and draws up a comparative analysis - clearly formulates his/her viewpoint regarding the role of media in the fight against climate change</p>	<p>the teacher - expresses his/her own point of view without integrating additional information from other sources - is able to motivate his/her answer, only if helped by the teacher. - chooses between Greta's or Boyan's actions without motivating his/her answer - formulates his/her viewpoint regarding the role of media in the fight against climate change, only if helped by the teacher</p>
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Active Citizenship – An Assessment Model

This evaluation model was based on questions 3, 4, 5 of the *ACTA problem-based test*.

Interpretation structures

Level A (advanced)	Level B (intermediate)	Level C (weak)	Level D (non-autonomous)
<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies at least 3 stringent environmental issues that affect his/her own country nowadays - distinguishes between local and national environmental issues based on reliable information and communication with the peers; is aware of the fact that environmental actions can only be organized in a society that supports democratic values such as 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies 2 stringent environmental issues that affect his/her own country nowadays - distinguishes between local and national environmental issues based on reliable information and communication with the peers - is able to select his/her environmental actions and to reflect upon them - is able to think 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies a stringent environmental issue that affects his/her own country nowadays - distinguishes between local and national environmental issues based on reliable information - is able to select his/her environmental actions - provides one example of 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies a stringent environmental issue that affects his/her own country nowadays, only if helped by the teacher - distinguishes between local and national environmental issues, only if helped by the teacher - is able to select his/her environmental actions, only if



<p>freedom of association and freedom of speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to select his/her environmental actions, to reflect upon them and to put forward the role of personal involvement in preventing pollution - is able to think globally, by providing at least 3 examples of how environmental actions are connected on a local, national and international level 	<p>globally, by providing 2 examples of how environmental actions are connected on a local, national and international level</p>	<p>how environmental actions are connected on a local, national and international level</p>	<p>helped by the teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understands how environmental actions are connected on a local, national and international level only if helped by the teacher
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Action structures

Level A (advanced)	Level B (intermediate)	Level C (weak)	Level D (non-autonomous)
<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to present and explain 2 concrete environmental actions s/he has undertaken, emphasizing the importance of community-level cooperation - explains his/her 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to present and explain 2 concrete environmental actions s/he has undertaken - explains his/her personal actions in 2 clear and well-structured 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to present and explain a concrete environmental action s/he has undertaken - explains his/her personal 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - states an environmental action s/he has undertaken - lists his/her personal actions, without explaining them - presents his/her personal



<p>personal actions in at least 2 clear and well-structured sentences, offering all the relevant details; - includes, when presenting his/her personal actions, 2 elements that show their potential environmental impact; refers to the importance of follow-up actions</p>	<p>sentences - includes, when presenting his/her personal actions, 2 elements that show their potential environmental impact</p>	<p>actions in a clear and well-structured sentence - includes, when presenting his/her personal actions, an element that show their potential environmental impact</p>	<p>actions without including elements that show their potential environmental impact</p>
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