



CONSTRUCTIVE INTERACTION

A guide to reinforcing democratic participation and
preventing hate speech and violent radicalisation

Eds.
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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
FINLAND IN 2025	7
Maria Edel	
CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION AT SCHOOL AND IN SOCIETY	13
Severi Hämäri and Markus Neuvonen	
PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY AT SCHOOL	20
Matti Rautiainen	
PREVENTION OF EXTREME RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM	24
Tarja Mankkinen	
WORKING FOR SECURITY TOGETHER	30
Katja Nissinen	
HOW TO TACKLE HATE SPEECH IN SOCIAL MEDIA SERVICES	34
Tuula Nousiainen	
LANGUAGE EDUCATION CREATES AND MEDIATION MENDS INTERACTION	41
Paula Mattila	
THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION (EDC/HRE) PROGRAMME	45
Kristina Kaihari	
A YOUNG PERSPECTIVE TO RADICALISATION	48
Matias Salo	
IMPORTANT LINKS	51
THE AUTHORS	53
APPENDICES	56
Competences for Democratic Culture	56
A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism	62

FOREWORD

The world is going through major changes. At least this is what it feels like when you follow the media and listen to conversations. People are on the move to the extent that there is talk about new migrations of peoples. International terrorism is a constant cause for concern also in Europe. Global warming is changing ecosystems in various ways and for its part increases the restlessness of people. At worst, democracy, regarded in Europe as a fundamental right, turns into populist commenting even at the level of states. This restlessness affects children, young people and their homes, testing children's and their educators' ability and willingness to express compassion. In addition to the concrete restlessness we see face-to-face with people, social media makes it possible to react online almost faster than thought and in a widely visible manner, enabling the creation of boundaries between us and the others.

The new national core curricula for basic education and general upper secondary education have now been completed and school work has largely been based on them since August 2016. The first normative National core curriculum for early childhood education and care was issued by the Finnish National Agency for Education in October 2016 and the local curricula based on it will be introduced in autumn 2017. The policies outlined in the core curriculum documents entail transversal competence themes preparing for a sustainable future, and the teaching and learning of skills based on these competences follows teachers and learners through the entire continuum of education and training. The task of teachers and, above all, learners in early childhood education and care and in the entire general education is to adopt the skills required in thinking and learning, taking care of oneself and managing daily life, multiliteracy, participation and influencing. The same framework conditions – respect for human dignity and the ability to live with other people and the entire ecosystem – are also reflected in the value base of each core curriculum and in the characteristics defined for the school culture. The norms are in place, but it is essential that teaching and other school activities guide towards these values and operating practices.

Capable of independent thinking and responsibility, learners will be able to adopt them.

Alongside and in the background of the work on the national core curricula, wide international cooperation is carried out in Finland to support a dignified everyday life and lasting interaction. The Council of Europe, the European Union and UNESCO have for their part included education for a community-based, democratic and inclusive culture and tackling violent marginalisation developments in their lists of topical tasks.

Of course, what is more important than reading international guidelines and national core curricula is that today's challenges are brought up in education by schools and day-care centres and that these institutions intervene in activities that give cause for concern. It is also important that there are transparent structures for intervention and all members of the communities are familiar with them.

This publication offers thoughts on ethics, human rights, democratic competences, stronger participation, mediation and cooperation between schools and the police. The central idea is that pupils should also learn to discuss difficult and controversial issues in a constructive and critical manner while respecting others. School should be a safe place where every member of the school community feels valued and capable of influencing common issues. Hate speech or bullying are not tolerated at school. A school community that supports its pupils prevents them from marginalisation and drifting towards supporting extremist movements. A caring school community knows how to help children and young people with difficulties and how to intervene in any developments that give cause for concern.

I would like to express a warm thank you to all those who have participated in preparing this publication. I hope this material will encourage the reader to reflect on the actions their own school has taken to create lasting interaction.

Helsinki 1 March 2017

Jorma Kauppinen

FINLAND IN 2025

Maria Edel

The Government of Finland has set an objective according to which in 2025, Finland will be a good country for everyone. This means that the country will be welcoming and international with people representing many different languages and cultures and displaying a positive attitude towards one another and the rest of the world, making Finland a unique place to live in. However, a difficult economic situation, uncertainties related to the rapid changes in society and the refugee crisis have created a breeding ground for hostile language, extremist views and sharp confrontations in Finland and elsewhere in Europe. Hate speech targets different population groups, minorities and individuals. It shakes the foundations of trust and the sense of security. Hate speech and the experience of threat have already led to negative behaviour towards immigrants and towards being different in general.

Public authorities are responsible for securing the implementation of the rule of law, democracy and human rights. Trust and mutual respect between citizens as well as the institutions maintaining them have been the pillars of wellbeing in Finland. Hate speech and racism mean that certain groups of people have to live in an atmosphere in which the position of their members as equal members of the community is openly denied. To be able to guarantee a dignified life for everyone we must ensure that no one has to face violence, threat or hostility.

A large number of immigrants have arrived in Finland within a short period of time. Most Finns have very little experience of interaction with immigrants. Experiences and feelings of injustice, social exclusion, meaninglessness and sometimes bullying are factors that may also contribute to hate speech and racist behaviour. It is therefore important to increase participation and interaction and to strengthen people's knowledge and their ability to put themselves in the position of another person. We must intervene in hate speech and racism by taking both fast-acting measures and measures that help to prevent negative phenomena in advance.

In March 2016, the Ministry of Justice published a report on hate speech targeted at different population groups. According to the report, the measures taken to prevent harassment and hate speech should be visible to citizens in everyday activities. This means that citizens should be encouraged to be active and their awareness should be raised. Courage to intervene, for example, by organising different campaigns is also required. Non-governmental organisations should play a strong role in defending human rights and in producing low threshold services. A variety of organisations should invest in human rights education and

equality planning and these should be included in all work with children and young people.

As part of the Meaningful in Finland programme, training is organised for those who work with children and young people to provide them with new competences for working in a multicultural environment. Teaching staff and other professionals are coached to conduct difficult discussions related to issues such as hate speech, racist behaviour and the signs of radicalisation. Education ensures that those who work with children and young people have the capabilities to strengthen children's and young people's democratic values, awareness of human rights and sense of inclusion in their work. We organise events in which internationally and nationally proven models and methods for achieving the above-mentioned objectives are introduced and concrete tools are given to educational institutions. Multiliteracy, critical media literacy and critical thinking are some of the other themes in education. These emphases are taken into account for example in the development programme for teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers prepared by the Teacher Education Forum.

Higher education institutions are renewing the curricula for teacher education and developing the operating culture. They also ensure that equality is realised nationwide. Teacher education units are intensifying their cooperation with experts on human rights.

Prevention of extreme radicalisation and extremism

Violent extremism means that violence is used, threatened with, encouraged or justified on the grounds of one's own ideology. Violent radicalisation may result in a person joining violent extremist groups or activity. In its most extreme form, violent radicalisation may lead to terrorist acts.

Violent radicalisation and extremism can best be tackled through preventive work. Prevention is always more effective than dealing with the consequences. Prevention increases people's safety and sense of security and reduces the confrontation between different population groups and the polarisation of society. In Finland, the threat of violent radicalisation and extremism is still low compared to many other countries. It has been increasing over the past few years, however.

There is no exhaustive single explanation for why young people join violent extremist movements. Most young people in the world never resort to supporting violence, even if they come from challenging backgrounds. On the other hand, a young person with an entirely normal, even wealthy background may feel frustrated about society and social injustices and resort to violence as a means of bringing about a change. However, social integration seems to play an important

role in tackling extremist movements and violent extremism. Marginalised young people without opportunities to make their voice heard are more vulnerable to the promises made by recruiters than others. Therefore Finland, too, should increasingly pay attention to measures that prevent marginalisation among both immigrants and the native Finnish population.

Those working with young people should try to understand the reasons for radicalisation as a phenomenon and the factors affecting it in the background. At the same time, however, we have to avoid stigmatising individual population groups on the basis of religion, among other things. A broad societal debate is required to tackle violent terrorism. Being a member of a group and feeling appreciated by others is meaningful to young people in particular and often the primary reason for adopting violently extremist views or joining a group. A lack of alternatives can be regarded as one of the main reasons for radicalisation.

In the West, experiences of discrimination, racism and exclusion make young people more vulnerable to the messages, ideologies and influence of extremist movements. An extremist movement may be the first community that makes the young person feel appreciated and gives him or her some kind of status. A sense of social exclusion, unemployment, dropping out of school or a lack of education creates a breeding ground for radicalisation. In the Western countries, the integration and language skills also play a significant role. A perception of injustice fosters the phenomenon.

However, we should remember that violent radicalisation is a marginal phenomenon. The majority of those who become radicalised never resort to violence. When channelled in appropriate ways, radicalisation may also be a positive phenomenon.

How can school prevent violent radicalisation?

Schools play a central role in the prevention of violent radicalisation for a number of reasons. Basic education reaches practically all young people and upper secondary education a large number of young people. School is one of the most important places for societal education and growing into citizenship. It can function as a forum for societal discussion, where also solutions to societal problems and phenomena can be developed. Humanity, general knowledge and ability, equality and democracy constitute one of the groups of underlying values in the new National core curriculum for basic education. The pupils are guided to act in a pluralistic society that understands diversity and respects human rights and equality in accordance with the values and principles of democracy.

The social task of basic education is to promote equity, equality and justice. The utilisation of interactive learning environments and learning outside the school

are seen as instructional resources. Schools and teachers are free to choose how to reach the goals and contents set for learning and what materials and methods to use. Many organisations improving skills in human rights, peace education and media literacy as well as Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) have produced support material on resolving conflicts, living in peace, promoting empathy skills and improving critical media literacy for the use of teaching staff.

Violent radicalisation and extremism are relatively new topics in Finland. Schools may find these topics uncomfortable and difficult to talk about. They lack accurate information, experience and good practices. Some teachers and headmasters feel uncertain about how to react and respond to young people's comments that indicate extremist views. For example, school staff may feel unsure of when to contact the police about a young person. It is very important that no young person is stigmatised, no misunderstandings take place and no overinterpretations are made. We do not wish to send teachers in Finland a message that schools should especially be monitoring young people who are becoming radicalised.

Finnish schools should be offered more information about violent radicalisation and this information should be as accurate as possible. Faced with new challenges, teachers need support and tools to be able to carry out difficult discussions about controversial issues with young people, including discussions related to extremist views. It is important to make young people feel safe and accepted in the school environment and allow them to express their thoughts without adults feeling insecure or being provoked by it. Interaction should be open and non-judgemental and it should be based on honesty and trust.

The starting point for the development of solutions is to enhance empathy and interaction skills and do things collectively. A young person whose situation gives cause for concern should be included in activities and an attempt should be made to include the person in the community instead of excluding him or her as a threat. Shared views and decisions that everyone can live with spring from a dialogue. In the course of the process, the participants often realise that most of them agree about the problem and how it should be solved and there is no conflict after all. We can also ask children and young people what we would want Finland to look like, say, in five years' time.

A national action plan coordinates preventative work

The Ministry of the Interior uses the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism to coordinate the nationwide work to prevent radicalisation. In Finland, parties such as the police, teachers, social workers, healthcare professionals, youth workers, organisations and religious and other communities work at the grassroots level.

The target group of the Action Plan is groups and individuals at risk of being radicalised. Its aim is to ensure that the capacities and permanent structures for the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism are in place everywhere in Finland. In particular, the aim is to enhance the ability of children and young people to recognise and guard against messages and influence inciting violence. The programme has been prepared in broad cooperation with the authorities, non-governmental organisations and representatives of communities and it was approved by the ministerial working group on internal security in April 2016.

The prevention of violent radicalisation is carried out at local, national and international levels. Finland also participates actively in international cooperation. Through international activities, countries not only exchange knowledge of experiences and good practices, but also collectively reflect on different measures for the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism.

The National Action Plan implements the objectives that have also been set at an international level by the European Union and the UN. Nordic cooperation develops research and practical measures for the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism.

Schools that encourage s dialogue

Schools must pay attention to ensuring that every young person feels seen and heard. It is one of the fundamental needs of all humans to feel meaningful. A large number of good practices and participatory operating methods that include pupils are available in Finland and across the world. Bodies such as the Regional State Administrative Agencies train teachers in the prevention of violent radicalisation and conducting difficult discussions. The Finnish National Agency for Education also offers the opportunity to organise staff training related to these topics. The Council of Europe, UNESCO and the Nordic Council of Ministers are among the international cooperation partners that have developed web-based material.

A wealth of examples of good practices in different countries can be found on the website of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN).

The Ombudsman for Children is one of the actors to have expressed their concern over extremist views of young people in Finland. Extremist views among young people must be faced and challenged. Without a dialogue, the polarisation of society will increase. People may begin to feel that the rule of law does not provide security for them or meet their needs and start to look for solutions themselves. Children's and young people's extremism must be encountered in their own world, before it develops into networks and movements in the world of adults.

In the future, we are likely to be facing new challenges that will also be reflected on children and young people. For example, as a result of climate change, more refugees will probably come to Finland. Trust and mutual respect between citizens as well as the institutions maintaining them have been the pillars of wellbeing in Finland. Finland is a 100-year-old country whose people have over time developed into a unified nation. This unity is a strength that will help us tackle problems. We should start to use it to our advantage. If we openly discuss issues such as immigration and matters related to it in educational institutions as well as in other contexts, we can move in a more constructive direction. Through a dialogue, we can form a shared view and make decisions on the direction in which we are moving.

There are currently many difficult conflicts in the world causing suffering and far-ranging consequences such as displacement and terrorism. We cannot afford to close our eyes to that in Finland, either. In 2010, the war in Syria was a headache of only a few analytics, and three years ago, no one could have imagined that there would be a war in the eastern parts of Syria today. If preparedness for compromises had been established in time, human lives and a lot of money would have been saved.

To enable people to act more wisely in the future, it is important that even children and young people at school learn (with the help of their teachers) to understand diversity and similarity and, above all, to live together in peace while respecting one another. This publication is one answer and tool for achieving that.

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION AT SCHOOL AND IN SOCIETY

Severi Hämäri and Markus Neuvonen

Teacher and educators face considerable and often conflicting pressures in their work. While international comparisons show that young people in Finland are doing reasonably well, teachers also face a different kind of reality in the daily life of the school. In addition to everything else, they may come face to face with chronic anxiety, aggression, black and white misconceptions or incitement of hatred, in front of which they may feel considerably helpless.

The purpose of this article is to briefly explore these phenomena. We will try to justify why it is on the one hand critically important but on the other hand also possible, easy and useful to teach a constructive and sensible manner of discussion in the classroom. In the beginning, we will touch on topics such as the psychology behind the extreme phenomena occurring in discussions, in other words how certain basic structures of thinking make us prone to produce and spread misconceptions and hate speech. Next, we will consider how important a constructive and sensible manner of discussion is in terms of democracy and introduce common obstacles to it: simplified myths and misconceptions about what "sensible talk" is. In the end, we will discuss the necessity of both emotional skills and the building of trust in learning these critical discussion skills.

Our central argument is that room must intentionally be created for sensible discussion both in the classroom and in society. This does not happen automatically or in a vacuum but requires that both teachers and pupils have a positive attitude to sensible discussion. By teaching discussion, opinion-forming and emotional skills, we also develop a wiser society and a more flexible classroom culture. Schools and teachers unavoidably play an important part in how pupils adopt these skills that are so important in life – consciously or subconsciously.

Human mind is biased towards certainty

Today, we have to process more abstract, ambiguous information about the world than people did 30 years ago, not to mention 50,000 years ago. The flood of information is logically conflicting, unclear and uncertain, which may be why this time seems to be characterised by constant insecurity, confusion and uncertainty about what is true and what is not. Because of the discrepancies aggravated by the easy availability of information, we are almost fervently uncertain about

matters such as the diet, the truthfulness of the news, global politics, future work prospects, health or the environment. Not many of us have proper tools for living in harmony with these conflicts of information.

If we want to understand where the increasingly common snappish speaking culture and incitement come from, we have to start from the prehistory of man. The reason is that we carry with us the ancient behavioural remnants that research calls *heuristics* and *biases*.¹ They are fast information processing methods that proved to be vital at some stage of our prehistory and have therefore been coded as a permanent part of the biology of our thinking and decision-making. We can become more aware of them and reduce their impact, but we can never get rid of them.

For example, instead of learning something new and changing our opinion, we intuitively look for safety and certainty by allying with those who think the same way as we do. Our intuition also drives us to solve disagreements and the threat of uncertainty involved in them by becoming more aggressive. We shout louder and press our hands into fists as if this changed the validity of our statements. However, it does not.

One of the biases functioning in that situation is the *confirmation bias*, the inclination to seek support for the views we have already adopted instead of changing our understanding whenever there is a change in the information we receive from around us. When there is little food available and life is limited to concrete, physical chores, survival often depends on rapid decision-making. In that case, the ability to avoid any unnecessary hesitation in our thinking is a useful trait. However, the same trait is not equally suitable in the modern world of abstract, complex information and differing views. It is more likely to generate problems as it prevents us from learning something new and encountering perspectives that we are not familiar with. Because of this cognitive bias, we create our own reality “bubble” online.

It is part of a wider inclination to favour certainty and avoid uncertainty – even at the expense of more sensible alternatives. The feeling of uncertainty causes anxiety and is a heavy and painful experience for our brain. Our ability to be genuinely curious and open in front of new things is fairly limited, although there are differences between individuals.

It is well known in social psychology that particularly the feeling of threat makes people look for support in so-called ingroup/outgroup setups. When faced with a non-specific threat, we feel the need to seek togetherness, to close our ranks. We are also overly alert for anything that might “cause” this threat. In the end, the “cause” may be anything: hair length, skin colour, a certain vehicle, taste

1 See for example Kahneman, Daniel: Thinking, fast and slow. Farrar, Faust and Giraux 2011. The topic is also widely discussed in Neuvonen, Markus: Päättää viisaasti (“Decide wisely”). Talentum 2014.

in music and so on. Xenophobia, the fear of strangers or unknown things is a characteristic that we can learn and teach people to live with. Some learn it well, others less well. However, we must not and should not use any kind of moralism to try to eradicate this suspiciousness that is deeply encoded in our biology.

Democracy, uncertainty and the myths of sensible talk

President Martti Ahtisaari and his organisation CMI have negotiated a truce even between Angry Birds and the pigs hated by them. The most important question that Ahtisaari can pose as a peace mediator is: "Are you taking this seriously or am I wasting my time?" Namely, a constructive, sensible discussion can only succeed when the parties all want to achieve it.

The moral importance and the benefits of the "shilly-shally" democratic decision-making process that appears "slow" and "inefficient" cannot be taken for granted – not even in Finland. A typical feature of democracy is that some citizens are always ready to give up democracy. This feature has recently become emphasised: a desire for "strong leaders" who "fix everything" has emerged in the entire Western world, particularly in a way that is linked to hate speech and the rhetoric of confrontation. A carefully considered, justified and multi-voiced decision-making process that settles with compromises seems very vague when the alternative promised is "solutions", "speaking out" and "fixing things" straight away.

The way our instincts react to the threat of uncertainty is particularly difficult from the viewpoint of a democratic society. Democracy is not merely voting and an arbitrary rule of the majority. The functioning of a democratic system is based on talking about common issues reasonably and openly enough and that this is really what is done. In a functioning democracy, conflicts of interests can be highlighted, political options can be offered freely and justifications for opinions can be evaluated from a number of different points of view. Therefore, what a functioning democracy particularly requires from its citizens is an ability and patience to tolerate differences of opinion and the uncertainty that follows from it. As we have seen in history and can see in the current situation globally, the democratic system begins to regress without this tolerance: first it becomes a system based on the power of incitement and demagogues and gradually develops into a tyranny of despots.

The skills required by democracy focus above all on forming and expressing opinions. However, these central skills have proven to be considerably more complicated than it has been thought. What has been particularly detrimental for the maturing of opinion-forming skills is the general myth of "sensible talk". We should therefore abandon the myths of "strictly sensible talk", the power of reason, "hard" facts and the view that all opinions are equally good.

It is not enough just to explain how things are. The Finnish discussion tradition fosters the myth of a short-spoken “expert” who is difficult to understand and the opposite, a fluent and verbose “big mouth”. Although the Finnish rhetorical tradition values brevity and directness, an inability to express oneself or argue a point are not considered to be virtues. Instead of depth of thought, quietness, clumsiness and inability to justify one’s opinion from several points of view may also be a sign of a lack of thought. It may be difficult to make this distinction if people are specifically taught to value clumsiness.

Even if you justify “well enough”, it is not enough to convince. Aristotle already wrote in his *Rhetoric* that a discussion based on sensible arguments is only possible among friends, in relationships in which there is no need to suspect the other one’s intentions. Current research in communication sciences and psychology has come to the same conclusion: convincing largely takes places by other means than just sensible talk and arguments. In other words, sensible discussion can only arise if special preconditions are created for it. For these preconditions to exist, the participants also need an ability to see when the discussion is not based on sensible arguments and the skills to cool the heated discussion down.

Hard facts and soft values do not exist

One central myth puts facts and values into an order of priority in a way that does not stand up to closer scrutiny. By claiming that something is a fact, it is easy to hide the value choices behind the discussion. For example, listing mere numbers and details is not same as providing “hard facts” (especially as about 97.4 per cent of statements justified by numbers have been invented, like this one). On the other hand, something as cold and hard as money is as an institution based purely on a value as “soft” as trust. Values also creep into facts in comparisons (such as “more than”, “larger than” with the meaning “better than”) without us noticing it. The ability to identify values in statements concerning facts and to discuss them sensibly is one of the most important opinion skills.

The quality of the opinion matters

One of the myths is that opinions are just “matters of taste”. In other words, the assumption is that there is no way to rank opinions or that, in terms of objectivity, the assumed “opponent” to the opinion should always be taken equally seriously and considered to be equally important. This myth is particularly detrimental as it leads to distorted illusions about equality or an understanding that by taking two extremes, we can find some kind of “truth” between them. For example, by assuming that violent racists and ordinary people who are concerned about human rights and compliance with law are the two “extremes”, the “happy

medium” would be placed somewhere around only mildly violent racism. Or, by assuming that “fairness” means naive, black and white juxtapositions, marginal views based on superstition or lying can be presented as equal to strong scientific consensus. There are quality differences in opinions in terms of both the quality of argumentation and the general acceptability of the underlying moral and factual assumptions. We should teach pupils to demand that discussions fulfil some quality criteria – we must not sell public debate cheaply to loudmouths and inciters of hatred.

The role of emotional skills

The most important part of opinion-forming and discussion skills is related to processing emotions, however. Encountering a differing opinion unavoidably causes uncertainty, whether we want it or not. The more fundamental the belief is and the more it defines our self, the more stressful the resulting uncertainty will typically be. In other words: we experience a threat when our self-image and perception of the world are questioned.

But, protecting ourselves from that stress is not good for us. On the contrary, to learn to cope with differences of opinion and uncertainty, we need controlled exposure to it. This conflict can aptly be compared to how a very high level of hygiene may make a person prone to allergies, while sufficient exposure to impurities helps us to develop a healthy resistance to diseases. The same phenomenon recurs in relation to opinions, differences of opinion and dealing with uncertainty.

School unavoidably and inevitably teaches emotional skills to both pupils and teachers. The key question is how skilful, conscious, reflective and transparent this learning and teaching is. Are emotional reactions used as an interesting topic of discussion and object of study and is awareness of them promoted – or are they brushed under the carpet pretending that they do not exist? Teaching emotional skills has finally been given an important role in the National core curriculum for basic education. The skills have not been included in the core curriculum for general upper secondary education quite to the same extent (except for the optional course in psychology), but teaching the parallel and closely related argumentation and opinion-forming skills has been given more emphasis in the compulsory courses in philosophy.

It is important to note and make pupils aware of the impact of emotions not only as regards reactions to threats but also more widely – how we are vulnerable to promises and impressions, incitement of joy or hatred, encouragement and discouragement. Becoming aware of and recognising these emotions and associating them with the ways of influencing that evoke them is an important analytical skill for any participant in a discussion, but particularly for children

and young people in the risk group. Emotional skills are at the heart of all communication, also sensible, constructive and argumentative communication.

However, the most important thing is to be aware that a constructive discussion is not possible if unfamiliar opinions are seen as a threat and cause an uncontrollable reaction. The first and the most important skill to teach is the skill of calming down to listen. A sensible discussion is not possible without an ability to slow down heated emotions, not be provoked and listen attentively what the other participants mean. Calming down and listening to oneself and the others is the key to a culture of constructive discussion and it is a skill that can be systematically taught.

The big promise of discussion skills

It is a victory for the school, the democratic society and the pupil's own interests when a child or a young person learns to think that: a) the quality of the opinion matters, b) values can and must be discussed sensibly, c) convincing requires a lot of effort and d) matters (especially the truth) do not speak for themselves. The ability to think independently and form opinions carefully is the most valuable gift school can give and it can be further improved by teaching emotional and listening skills, by correcting misunderstandings in communication and by offering safe opportunities for polishing the skills required in forming an opinion and dealing with differences of opinion.

The most important thing is that learning these skills is not hindered and prevented. For example, teachers themselves should not be afraid of conflicts and losing their authority over knowledge and for that reason prevent or not allow difficult questions when a student has lost his or her motivation to study. Teachers can provide a safe space in which differences of opinion and differing views can be expressed, matters questioned and even wild mind games are allowed as long as the rules of good opinion-forming are observed and the opinions are open for discussion. This is how a constructive, open discussion culture is created.

Emotional, discussion and opinion skills can be applied to all content of instruction and they can be used to teach behaving oneself, compassion, perseverance, problem solving and cooperation. The larger the role given to a way of speaking that is based on argumentative, sensible discussion and reflecting together in the pupil-teacher relationship, the more positive the classroom culture.

After all, the basic need behind defiance, joking, denial, withdrawal, threats and other disruptive behaviour is the need to understand and be understood, although it is often buried deep. Incitement and identification with extremist groups often

result from a destructively channelled fear of shame or social exclusion, a general sense of lack of life management skills, uncertainty about the future or insecurity about oneself. Would these phenomena exist if pupils had the tools for reflecting on and processing the feeling of uncertainty and discussing conflicting factual claims in the spirit of shared curiosity, and a fearless understanding that one's own impressions are not always correct?

The greatest promise of constructive discussion skills is that they may provide a channel for realising and expressing the above-mentioned needs and fears without anyone - the person concerned or anyone else – having to suffer in any way. In the classroom, an attitude that seeks room for discussion, takes into consideration the role of emotions and builds shared trust can significantly contribute to the mental health of children, young people and future adults. We will not be able to eliminate uncertainty from this world through education, but we can influence the feeling of threat unnecessarily associated with it.

PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY AT SCHOOL

Matti Rautiainen

Introduction

The ultimate objective of education for participation and democracy is to engage children and young people in a democratic society. The ways leading to this may be diverse, but it is not possible without involving children as active operators exercising power.

One of the fundamental questions in education and training is to what extent school should model its operation on society. Finland and largely the Western countries have adopted John Dewey's (1859–1952) idea of school as a miniature society. According to Dewey, school should provide children with the opportunity to grow into citizenship as authentically as possible. In other words, school should aim to conduct a democratic way of life to enable children to become citizens who are committed to democracy and develop it. This way of life is supported not only by democratic operating practices, but also by the values underlying democracy and by trust, which can be regarded as the binding agent of democracy. Without trust, there is no real democracy.

Shaking up the forms of democracy

The central idea in democracy is to ask and reflect on how we organise our life together so that the values we believe in can be realised and everyone has the chance to live a good and happy life.

In the Finnish culture, democracy is mainly based on its representational forms, also in schools. At school, the statutory body for students is the board of the student council, to which pupils are in most schools elected from each class. The board of the student council is the pupils' voice in the school, but its position depends on the head of the school, who may include it in decision-making or leave it to take the responsibility for smaller tasks, such as planning some of the school celebrations.

Democracy in Finnish schools is relatively firmly based on already existing forms of democracy, which schools generally introduce according to the model. As the new curriculum brings participation and pupils' active role to the centre of the school community, schools must reconsider their school culture. The school community should conduct a relevant discussion on values to define the

importance of education for participation for the school community and then decide on how to proceed. When the pupils are included in this process from the beginning, the school is at the core of a democratic way of life.

This change could even be called the third reform of education. While the first school reform in the 1860s brought everyone the opportunity to obtain an education, the second reform provided equal opportunities to education (comprehensive school, 1970s). In the third reform, launched in 2016, equality is taken one step further by strengthening the culture of participation so as to make pupils more equal members of the school community. This requires a change in the school culture.

To enable democracy and foster it, the school community must allow time for shared discussions, joint development and the resulting operating practices. This does not mean that representative democracy will be abandoned but that parallel forms arise from the school community. They are not separate activities but part of the normal everyday life in the school.

Three cornerstones of change

“To think what we are doing” is the central idea and core of curiosity (study) in Hannah Arendt’s (1906-1975) work *The Human Condition* in which she examines the life of human communities. Could this central idea proposed by Arendt be one of the fundamental tasks of the school community? For this to happen, the school community should focus attention on the following things.

1. The members of the school community should trust and appreciate one another. Although power relationships between teachers and pupils at school are unequal, trust is a different matter. For example, trust means that pupils feel their experiences, views and justified opinions are valuable even if they are contrary to the decision that has been made. Growing to be a democratic citizen also means growing to tolerate disappointments and compromises. Children and young people accept this if they feel they have been heard and understand the justifications for the decisions. The only way to earn this trust is to include pupils in the development of the community by giving them responsibility.
2. Giving responsibility leads to experimenting and results in both successes and failures. The core of democracy is based on experiments aimed at finding the best possible operating model for living together and agreeing about decision-making. The best possible way is always relative to who the community consists of and what it aims at.

The forms of participation and democracy are thus redefined through these experiments, or at least they should be redefined that way. As a rule, fostering

and developing democracy as well as creating a wider culture of participation is difficult because the issues and decisions affect the entire community. The history of democracy proves this. Therefore, failures should also be allowed because they belong to the core of a democratic way of life – they make democracy real.

3. A discussion is a basic manifestation of democracy. Freedom of expression and opinion, the fundamental democratic rights, are the “most sacred” rights in a Western society as they enable the emergence of different views – a discussion – and thus the societal freedom of individuals. Democracy consists of agreements, which include laws, customs and norms. Agreements are always preceded by a discussion, either in parliament, in a public forum or in different communities. Discussions lead to communities being formed, which is why practising active discussions aimed at influencing people’s views is as important as practising an attitude that values, respects and listens to others. If school does not do this, it does not promote pupils’ ability to actively participate in societal discussions, nor does it provide tools for understanding discussions between other people. As a result, an individual’s growth to be a member of the community becomes more difficult because, instead of engaging in society, the individual may feel excluded from it.

Digital democracy

In a small community, the initial form of democracy, convening in one space, continues to be an effective form of democracy and has not lost its fascination. Other forms of democracy model this idea of gathering together, discussions and the ability to make decisions concerning common issues. Over the past few years, the digital world has also become one of the environments in which democracy can take place. It offers a variety of top-down and particularly bottom-up forms of democracy.

Because there is an emphasis on the headmaster’s role in the development of schools, headmasters play an important role as creators of the spirit of democracy. It also means improving the pupils’ position in the school structures and decision-making. In addition to consulting the student council, current digital solutions enable rapid implementation of surveys to find out pupils’ stand on a particular issue, if there is a willingness to hear it.

Equally, a digital environment provides an opportunity to form a democratic community in which it is possible for all members to be active, propose initiatives, continue discussions or study what democracy is. Democracy and participation are activities that help us structure and explore our shared world, but they are also learning contents that can be studied and provide a deeper and broader understanding of inclusion and democracy and their importance.

Everyday classroom culture is crucial

John Dewey emphasised the daily and commonplace nature of a democratic way of life. Pupils should constantly have the opportunity to practise the way of life of a participating and active citizen, which means that classroom practices, especially the structure of studying in class, play a key role. As the development of the school of the future focuses attention on an inclusive approach, the everyday classroom culture is the most important factor in building the coexistence of the whole community.

The three cornerstones of change described above also form the guidelines for the development of the everyday classroom culture. Finnish democracy has sometimes been described as joyless and serious. Building a shared world is of course a serious matter, but joy should not be forgotten, either. Seriousness is created by adhering to models and established operating practices, whereas the creation of new ideas and practices brings both new insights and diversity to life. Education for democracy and participation is aimed at providing children and young people with a sense of being part of the community. This can be achieved by sharing joys and sorrows, successes and failures, and other feelings. The most important thing is to create a classroom and a school in which this diversity is possible. It will allow us to decide together how we live with them. Democracy and participation are both a mentality and structures. Both are needed.

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PREVENTION OF EXTREME RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM

Tarja Mankkinen

In a seminar, a woman sitting next to me wanted to show me a photo. In the photo, two sweet toddlers were sitting side by side on a blanket. She asked me if I wanted to know who the children in the photo were and what became of them later. She then told me that one of them was her son who had gone to Syria to fight for Daesh² and had died there. The other little boy was one of those young men who committed terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015. Similar examples of young people using violence to realise their ideologies can also be found in Finland. Quite some time ago, two young people in a class had become involved with skinheads. No one intervened as there are not many skinheads and we have become used to them. One of these two young people committed a suicide at the age of 20 and the other one joined a violent extreme right-wing group and became one of its leaders. In both cases, you ask yourself, why did these boys end up like they did? Could their lives have gone in a different, better direction?

Violent radicalisation and extremism, violent extremist movements and political violence have existed throughout history. There are always people and groups of people who are so sure about the legitimacy of their ideology that they are prepared to lead crowds and promote the ideology even by means of violence. Also, there are always people who are ready to follow leading figures who convince their followers that violence is allowed and can be justified by their ideologies. The motives of the followers are diverse: one person may be attracted to the violence, another one may be looking for a community that appreciates him or her, and yet another may join a group together with friends.

No one is born a violent extremist

The motto of the prevention of violent extremism in Sweden is “No one is born an extremist”. It is a good starting point also for the work done in here Finland.

Violent radicalisation and extremism easily evoke images of young men ecstatic about blood and violence, the cruelty and motives of which are beyond the understanding of normal people. Over the past few years, the events in Syria and Iraq in particular have strengthened these impressions. Every day in the

² Daesh is a terrorist organisation operating in Syria and Iraq. It is also called by the names ISIS and ISIL.

news and online, we are confronted with so much brutality and violence, both fictional and real, that people try to protect themselves against the violence and the anxiety caused by it. One way to cope is to think that all badness comes from somewhere outside. Outside may mean something outside one's own community or something that comes from outside the borders of one's own country. When someone in one's own group is guilty of serious violence, the act is easily explained with reasons related to mental health problems or marginalisation, which make an incomprehensible act somehow comprehensible. An outsider who commits an act of violence is easily defined as a terrorist whose violence is beyond all understanding and there is no desire to look at the factors affecting in the background.

It is important to reflect on all that is said above as it contributes to what kind of action we take regarding persons who have been radicalised or are about to be radicalised violently.

What do we mean by violent radicalisation and extremism?

Violent radicalisation and extremism are defined in slightly different ways in different countries. From the beginning of the 21st century until the terrorist attacks that took place in Norway, violent radicalisation was almost always linked to violent jihadism and, above all, to the terrorism carried out by Al-Qaeda. After the attacks in Norway, more and more attention has been paid to violent extremism related to violent right-wing and left-wing extremism. Today, almost all countries in the European Union tackle all forms of violent extremism – the activities of the violent extreme right-wing and left-wing movements, violent extremism justified with religion and individual actors. The school killings that took place in Finland in 2007 and 2008 can be seen as examples of acts committed by individual actors. The emphasis of their prevention varies slightly from one country to another.

When we talk about extremism that is justified with religion, we usually mean violence and terrorism related to takfiri jihadist groups. The proponents of this ideology choose the targets of their violence, regardless of religion from states, communities and people who they consider to have offended their interpretation of Islam, the Islamic world or a group of Muslims. The interpretation of what is regarded as an offence that justifies violence varies greatly between the different groups. The differences between individuals are even greater. For example, military cooperation, foreign policy, perceived discrimination of Muslims or cartoon crises may individually or together be such offences.

In Finland, violent extremism means that violence is used, threatened with, encouraged or justified on the grounds of one's own ideology. Violent radicalisation is an individual process that may lead to the individual joining

violent extremist groups or activities. In its most extreme form, violent radicalisation may lead to terrorist acts. The prevention of violent extremism is important for social harmony and the safety and sense of security of communities and individuals. A visible increase in violent extremism in society may lead not only to a threat of direct violence but also to people not daring to exercise their constitutional rights such as the freedom of speech and expression or the freedom of movement. Violent extremism may also be targeted at property, but the primary focus of national prevention work is violence targeted at lives and health.

Should and can schools and educational institutions prevent violent radicalisation and extremism?

The debate on the responsibility and role of schools and educational institutions in the prevention of radicalisation and extremism has been reasonably intensive in the past few years. It intensified especially in 2015, when the European Union's ministers of education decided on a declaration in which they stated that educational administration has central duties in the prevention of violent radicalisation. The ministers emphasised that democratic values, human rights and equality can be promoted and the black-and-white thinking at the heart of extremist ideologies can be challenged as part of education.

In the United Kingdom, educational institutions have a statutory duty to prevent radicalisation and prevent young people from ending up in a situation in which they participate in terrorist activities or join terrorist organisations. It is part of fairly new legislation and has stimulated an intense debate. One of the reasons underlying this legislation are the substantial differences in factors related to educational institutions and teaching between the United Kingdom and Finland in general. The threat of violent extremism and terrorism in the United Kingdom is also considerably severe.

The situation in Finland is different. The educational system is good and there are still no significant differences in the quality of teaching between educational institutions. Student welfare and other activities have successfully managed to support students with problems. However, it is important that more information and capabilities that prevent violent radicalisation and extremism and increase capacities for active citizenship are provided as part of education also in Finland.

School is a place where young people can get information about violent extremist organisations and their history, actions and the consequences of the actions to people and to the safety, security and wellbeing of society. This enables young people to put current events into a perspective. School can also offer a place for discussing topics related to violent extremist movements as they are often found to be difficult. It is important to discuss difficult topics with young people

as they are interested in current issues and want to talk about them. Therefore, it is good that such discussions are conducted as part of learning and teaching at school. As part of the curriculum, school reinforces young people's development into active citizens, increases their knowledge about human rights and the democratic system and improves their media literacy and critical thinking. All these factors are central to the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism.

Hate speech and hate crime increase violent extremism

Year 2015 was a different year in many ways. A huge number of asylum seekers arrived in Europe, and 32,000 of them came as far as to Finland. The number is high as on average between 3,000 and 4,000 asylum seekers have come to Finland every year. Issues related to asylum seekers caused intense discussion among the native population. The activities of and support for violent extreme right-wing groups increased in European countries. In Finland, the National Socialist Nordic Resistance Movement (Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike)³ distributed material targeted against asylum seekers around the reception centres, increasing people's fear of asylum seekers. Confrontation and the polarisation of society increased and this was visible in homes, workplaces, schools and the public debate. Hate speech increased online and also outside it, and it was suddenly allowed to say things about people that would have been impossible to say publicly before. The number of hate crimes reported to the police also increased by 50 per cent from the previous year.

Hate speech and hate crimes promote violent radicalisation and the operation of extremist movements. The operation of extremist movements is based on a black and white world view in which there are only enemies or friends. As a matter of fact, the enemies are not human beings at all and violence can be used against them as necessary. This black and white world view and the division of people into enemies and friends is also apparent in the chat rooms online. It is extremely dangerous if hatred and hating become a commonplace. Hate speech on the internet may lower the threshold for using violence particularly when speech inciting to hatred and violence is read by a person who is in a vulnerable and insecure position because of mental health issues, for example.

How is violent radicalisation and extremism tackled in Finland?

Finland published its first action plan for the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism in 2012 and the second one in April 2016. Prevention is carried out

³ The movement previously used the name Finnish Resistance Movement (Suomen Vastarintaliike)

in wide cooperation involving different authorities, non-governmental organisations and communities, including religious communities. Different administrative sectors are in charge of the measures in accordance with their responsibilities, and organisations and communities according to the principles of cooperation. The activities are coordinated and developed by the Ministry of the Interior. Cooperation works well, as everyone understands that the goal is a shared one. If violent radicalisation and extremism spread in Finland, the consequences will be harmful to all of us and the entire society, not only to those directly concerned by it.

The action plan includes several measures related to schools and educational institutions. Measures for increasing teachers' competences and expertise are already underway. The aim is also to launch research activities to increase knowledge of the challenge violent radicalisation and extremism pose to education. Research would be important in order to ensure that teachers receive knowledge-based support and guidance for preventing violent radicalisation and extremism. The new national core curricula support teachers' work in the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism. In the national core curricula for pre-primary and basic education confirmed in 2014 and the National core curriculum for general upper secondary education confirmed in 2015, media literacy has been included as part of transversal competences in the competence area of multiliteracy and it has been integrated in all subjects in basic education. In addition, human rights and growing into democratic citizenship have been given a larger role in the new core curricula for basic education.

Local cooperation groups operate in Turku, Helsinki, Tampere and Oulu and some of them also have representatives from educational administration. It is always possible to contact these groups regarding issues related to violent radicalisation and extremism. The aim is to establish cooperation groups also in other cities.

The action plan in its entirety is available at:

The action plan can be found at https://www.intermin.fi/download/67533_julkaisu_152016.pdf?a08617e4e3c4d388 (in Finnish) and https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/75413/at_IM_RADIKALEXTREMPROGRAM-SV_netti.pdf?sequence=1 (in Swedish).

The Ministry of the Interior publishes a situation overview of violent extremism regularly twice a year. The overview includes information on the state and developments of violent extremism and violent extremist movements in Finland. In addition, themed overviews focusing on a topical subject are published as necessary. In 2014, the Ministry published a themed overview examining how violent extremist movements and violent extremism manifest themselves in educational institutions in Finland. The overview was based on a survey conducted on educational institutions. The overview (in Finnish) is available at https://www.intermin.fi/download/58696_Vakivaltainen_ekstremismi_Suomessa_-_tilannekatsaus_1-2015_FINAL.pdf?33cbc771271ed288.

In summer 2016, the Ministry of the Interior organised a societal Safari camp for young people in cooperation with Finn Church Aid. The topic given for the camp was how young people can themselves prevent violent radicalisation. The camp was implemented by Demoshelsinki and the work of the young participants is introduced on a video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wY7U4lD3LcQ&feature=youtu.be>.

WORKING FOR SECURITY TOGETHER

Katja Nissinen

The objective of security cooperation between the police and schools is to improve security at schools. A central requirement in working together is to understand the responsibilities, roles and opportunities each party has in solving security challenges and developing a pleasant atmosphere. This cooperation is a long-standing tradition in Finland and has become a natural part of the work of schools and the police over the years.

The exchange of information and the tools chosen together play an important part in the prevention of offences and disturbances. Maintaining the security of everyday life requires creative solution models and an input from everyone. Although today's society is safer than before, the phenomena making it less safe keep changing. Schools and the police share the need to be able to anticipate these constant changes in their operating environment more intensively. Fortunately, they can do it together.

Violent radicalisation

Over the past few years, one of the topics of conversation in society has been violent extremism. It uses violence, threatens with violence or justifies violence with an ideology. It may be targeted at a group or individuals defined as enemies and causes fear and a sense of insecurity. According to research and observations, many factors contribute to radicalisation, including a sense of inequality, a general lack of prospects, a lack of education, absence of support networks, prejudices (discrimination, racism, hate speech) and stigmatising and blaming. Radicalisation is not something that happens overnight, the change is a sum of many factors or events. It is important to realise that radicalisation is not a problem of specific groups, but can happen to anyone. The change does not take place suddenly and the earlier someone intervenes in the changes, the better the chances of turning the person's path in a positive direction.

From the viewpoint of school, the worst possible threat is violence targeted at educational institutions. The reasons for acts of violence are always case-specific and everyone is needed to recognise the risks. Teachers are the key persons in recognising changes in their pupils. It is time to react if a young person withdraws or is excluded and isolated by others, he or she starts to demonstrate anger and aggressiveness in different forms, there is a significant increase in the person's use of intoxicating substances, or mental health problems emerge. The

above-mentioned examples do not make anyone a threat, but these areas have played a part when people have resorted to extreme solutions. Early intervention is therefore important.

Exchange of information to assess the threat

In the prevention work, it is important that local actors are able to recognise early signs and intervene in time when there are quiet signals. Networked cooperation in which specialists of different fields can exchange information and agree on procedures is at the heart of effective intervention. Exchange of information has often been considered to be problematic because of the secrecy obligation. The legislative amendment that entered into force in May 2015 facilitated the situation. The amendment provided actors with the right to report on their own initiative to the police information that is necessary for the assessment and prevention of a threat to lives or health without the secrecy obligation preventing it. The changes concerned basic education, basic education in the arts, pupil and student welfare, liberal adult education, vocational upper secondary education, general upper secondary education, universities, universities of applied sciences, youth work, social welfare and healthcare.

BASIC EDUCATION ACT: SECTION 40 CONFIDENTIALITY AND HANDLING OF PERSONAL DATA

Persons carrying out the tasks referred to in this Act have the right to report to the police information that is necessary for the assessment of a threat to lives or health and for the prevention of a threatening act without the secrecy obligation preventing it if they have as part of their duties obtained information about circumstances based on which they have reason to suspect that someone is at risk of becoming a victim of violence.

The threshold for contacting the police may be high. Concern over whether information can be disclosed to other authorities or what kind of measures will be taken by the authorities are usually the greatest threshold for contacting them. In my work at the Preventive Policing Unit of the Helsinki Police Department, I have encountered numerous situations in which a concerned teacher has called to ask for advice. What those phone calls have had in common is that the teachers have been very concerned and the pressure to solve the situation has been high, but at the same time, they have been worried about the secrecy obligation. The new legislation has facilitated this situation and makes it possible to exchange information more openly than before.

Cooperation between the police and school

The police and schools have worked in cooperation for a long time. The police are now adopting a different approach in their activities, focusing less on the traffic and legal awareness education that many people remember from school. However, schools will not be left to their own with security problems as the police will continue to help them in matters requiring the police. The core idea in the activities is to always gather together the parties concerned when a particular problem needs to be solved, with the intention of supporting children and young people, schools and families.

The threshold for contacting should remain low. Advice can always be requested from the police and they will provide help within the limits of their powers.

A wide range of measures for solving problems are available to the police and efforts are always made to do it discreetly, promoting a conciliatory atmosphere. Conversely, this means that a criminal procedure is by no means the only option available to the police. Instead, they cooperate with the other authorities using solution models that have been created together. At best, this means that help is given through the principle of one point of contact instead of the person subject to the activities having to shuttle from one authority to another. Networks enable the authorities to learn about each other's operating methods and competences and to learn to trust that the shared goal can be achieved and all parties have the professional skills required to deal with the matter.

In Helsinki, the police are contacted by teachers from comprehensive schools, vocational institutions, general upper secondary schools or adult education institutions on an almost daily basis. As a rule, the calls concern consultation, requests to meet or criminal matters. Through cooperation, a situation has been reached in which schools can solve minor security matters themselves, but headmasters, teachers, social workers and other school staff know that they can ask the police for advice in practically anything.

Hate speech

Hate speech should be intervened in whenever it is observed. It tends to create an atmosphere of hatred and fear. When identifying hate speech, a distinction should be made between speech that juridically leads to a punishment and an inappropriate, stigmatising and sharp way to use language in everyday speech. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe defines hate speech as follows: "Hate speech shall be understood as covering all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance."

Hate speech includes all kinds support for, promotion of or incitement to defamation, hatred or slandering targeted at a person or a group of people. It may be harassment, insulting, negative stereotyping, stigmatising or justifying all of the above expressions on grounds of “race”, skin colour, language, religion or conviction, national or ethnic origin, descent, age, disability, biological or social gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or other quality or position.

Hate speech often targets a person's qualities or identity. Hate speech is not only about insulting or slandering, it is a phenomenon that reflects the structures and attitudes prevailing in society. These attitudes are affected among other things by social inequality, power structures and prejudices against different groups. Hate speech can be used to insult and offend the target, but on the other hand reinforce the inequality prevailing in society. Hate speech also includes threatening or incitement to violence or hatred, which in its most serious form is an act punishable as a criminal offence. These offences include ethnic agitation, defamation or illegal threat.

Intervening in hate speech is challenging but by no means impossible. In schools, intervention is part of the early intervention approach and it is definitely possible to do something about the issue. If someone is insulted in any of the ways mentioned above, it should be possible to discuss the problem openly. Strict condemnation of the message does not necessarily change the behaviour of the speaker but it tells the person that it is not acceptable. However, I encourage you to elaborate on the problem, for example, by asking “Why did you say that?” or “Why do you think so”? Confrontation is not helpful in processing the situation; instead, there should be room for everyone's views in the discussion. Teachers are required to have the capabilities to support both the target of hate speech and its speaker. Pupils can practise expressing opinions in a constructive way and justifying them. The moment when intervention is required is often unique and it should be seized boldly. Even difficult topics can be discussed in the class when there is a safe adult steering the discussion.

HOW TO TACKLE HATE SPEECH IN SOCIAL MEDIA SERVICES

Tuula Nousiainen

The recent debate on hate speech and its spread online is not likely to have gone unnoticed by anyone. Combine it with young people's extremely active social media use and you get an equation that further increases the importance of media education and sets considerable challenges to it. According to the SoMe ja nuoret 2016 survey¹, young people themselves are also aware of this. More than 70 per cent of the young people aged between 13 and 29 who responded to the survey were of the opinion that social media practices, especially online behaviour and security, should be taught either at school or at home.

This article aims for its part to respond to this need by bringing up practical methods for reacting to hate speech and undesirable online behaviour in the social media. Its content is built around three themes. The first section surveys the tools offered by social media services for guarding against inappropriate behaviour. The second section handles reporting inappropriate content in these services. The third and last section briefly discusses social media as an arena for so-called counter-speech.

Guarding against inappropriate online behaviour

Different social media tools provide both direct, personal ways of guarding against undesirable content and ways of reporting such content so that it would no longer be visible to any users. As for personal guarding, it is important to know all the most important privacy settings and functionalities related to blocking users.

It is possible for every user to use the privacy settings of their social media account to restrict who can see the content shared by him or her and what information is available on him or her through the search function. When registering for the service, it is a good idea to check what kind of default privacy settings the service has and find out how they can be modified. Some services, such as Facebook, have defined separate default settings for minors: the search function in Facebook does not display the contact details, school or date of birth of minors in the public search results and the sharing of location data has been disabled as default².

Users may guard against inappropriate content also by blocking individual users from contacting them and seeing their status updates. A user may also prevent the content produced or shared by certain users so that these will not be visible to the user himself or herself. Because the different social media services are based on different types of sharing with audiences of different sizes, there is also variation in how the privacy settings can be modified and users blocked.

For example, in Facebook³, most of the interaction is based on sharing with a limited audience that has been accepted by the users themselves. If the person who has been sharing inappropriate content is in the user's friends list, the user may remove the person from the list and block private messages from that person. The easiest way to do this is to use the block function, which removes the blocked user from the friends list and prevents direct interaction (messages, friend requests, event invitations, tagging).

The functionality can also be used to block other users than just those on one's own friends list. If the user does not want to remove a person entirely from the friends list, the person can be added to the Restricted list, which allows the person to see the user's posts only if these have been defined public. Users may also adjust the extent to which the content shared by a certain user or page is visible in their news feed either by no longer following the person or page in question or by defining that they wish to see less content shared by this party in the future. All these functionalities have been collected under the *take a break* functionality, in which the visibility of all status updates made by a certain person to the user, the visibility of the user's own status updates to that person and the visibility of previous status updates including them both to others is defined in one setting.

A user account can also be defined entirely private in Twitter and Instagram. However, the basic idea in these two services and YouTube is based more strongly on public sharing than in Facebook, so the range of options available for restricting the audience and adjusting the privacy settings is slightly more limited. Blocking individual user accounts is possible in all these services. In Twitter⁴, the blocked user cannot see the tweets (in the profile directly or in searches) of the person who blocked the user, cannot send private messages to this person or follow the person. However, it is important to take into account that the tweets made from a public account are visible to everyone – also to the blocked person when the person is not signed into the blocked account. In Instagram⁵, blocking works in much the same way, but it is worth remembering that, even though comments cannot be sent when not logged in, it is possible to view public accounts and content through the browser without logging in. Users can be removed from friends and blocked from contacting also in Snapchat⁶. In YouTube⁷, it is possible to block users from commenting on one's own videos and channel and from sending private messages.

Reporting inappropriate online behaviour

The most straightforward ways for users to immediately limit the extent of their direct contact with undesirable content in their own user accounts have been introduced above. However, most of the inappropriate content and hate speech in the social media is not targeted directly at an individual user but occurs elsewhere such as in the comments made on the updates of other Twitter users, on the Facebook pages and groups followed by the user and, for example, in comments made on YouTube videos. Ordinary users are usually familiar with the functionalities available for personal protection at least at a general level: they are aware of the importance of their privacy settings and know the most important ways to prevent the occurrence of undesirable content in their message flow.

Many also know that it is possible to report inappropriate content – regardless of where it occurs – to the maintainers of the service with a couple of clicks. However, the process of reporting may look like a “black box” to users and they may not be aware what kind of process is launched in reality when content is reported. Large social media services have extensive resources at their disposal: teams tasked with reviewing reported content 24 hours a day, consisting of hundreds of people with different language and cultural backgrounds from across the world. In addition to knowing the language, they have to be able to see the reported content in its context and based on that assess whether it violates the rules of the service. Understanding national contexts plays an essential role in enabling them to decide whether a comment should be classified as hate speech or is otherwise inappropriate. The assessment of the reported content and the necessary interventions are based on the rules and community standards defined by the social media services. By hate speech community standards refer to derogatory content targeted at individuals or groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, disability or illness⁸.

- Facebook community standards: <https://www.facebook.com/community-standards>
- YouTube community guidelines: <https://www.youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/communityguidelines.html>
- Twitter rules: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/18311>
- Instagram community rules: <https://help.instagram.com/477434105621119>
- Snapchat community guidelines: <https://support.snapchat.com/fi-FI/article/guidelines>

For example, YouTube⁹ and Facebook¹⁰ describe their reporting processes on their help and support pages. Individual posts and comments as well as entire user accounts can be reported. The person reporting the content is requested to provide the reason – often both by choosing from different options and by writing

a free-form description. Particularly, if knowledge of the case-specific context is essential for understanding why the reported content is inappropriate, it is important to provide a description as precise as possible and clear justifications for why measures should be taken regarding the content.

For example, a comment that looks neutral in the social media may in its real context be part of wider harassment, online bullying or hateful behaviour. Even though the teams processing the contents know dozens of languages and know the cultural contexts of several countries, they remain unaware of such local and situation-specific backgrounds unless the reasons for reporting an inappropriate comment are explained in connection with the report. On the other hand, people sometimes share hate speech produced by someone else, for example, with the intention of increasing awareness of hate speech. Of course, the content does not need to be removed in such cases, but the purpose of posting it should be expressed clearly¹¹.

Reported content and user accounts will be examined case by case and the employees processing the reports also get in touch with the user that has been reported. The identity of the reporter always remains confidential. If the content is considered to be in violation of the community standards, the report may lead to the content being removed or the user account of the person responsible for it being closed; the consequences depend on the severity of the offence and the previous violations of the community standards by the user in question. The decision on whether the content is removed is not directly affected by the number of the reports submitted, but it may help the persons reviewing the content prioritise the received reports. The services also have certain automated functionalities based on reports; for example, YouTube automatically hides comments behind a click if a sufficient number of users have marked them as spam or harassment.

Social media and counter-speech

Even though the social media regrettably often provides an easy platform for spreading hate speech and a large part of reacting to online hate speech focuses on guarding against it, at best the most important social media services also have a lot of influence when hateful rhetoric is combatted through so-called counter-speech. Counter-speech means that users respond to hate speech and challenge it in a variety of ways in the arenas that hate speech occurs in.¹²

A compact guide has been published in relation to hate speech occurring especially on Twitter and responding to it: *Stopping Hate: How to Counter Hate Speech on Twitter?*¹³. The guide disseminates practical instructions and tips for effective and safe counter-speech, ranging from reflecting on objectives to the preparation of arguments, forming of messages and efficient ways of using

hashtags. The guide also urges to take care of safety and to work as a part of a wider community or group if possible rather than acting completely alone when presenting counter-speech.

Towards the end of 2016, YouTube in turn launched an initiative by the name *Creators for Change*¹⁴, which strives to make a positive impact in society. In the campaign, a number of popular YouTubers with different cultural backgrounds from across the world produce and share videos in their own channels, bringing up different societal viewpoints in an approachable manner with the aim of increasing awareness and promoting discussion on these phenomena. The themes are related to combatting hate speech, xenophobia and extremism and more generally to promoting empathy and tolerance. The aim of the *Creators for Change* programme is to launch and support local campaigns in cooperation with different organisations.

Conclusion

Social media services are facing an increasing pressure to take responsibility for the eradication of hate speech. In summer 2016, Facebook, Twitter, Google and Microsoft agreed with the EU on practices in which they promised to deal with most of the hate speech reported to them in less than 24 hours of it being reported.¹⁵ Even before that, Google, Facebook and Twitter made a similar agreement in Germany but according to the monitoring data, the companies have not reached a satisfactory level in terms of these objectives and may risk sanctions unless the situations improves.¹⁶

Because online hate speech is a constantly growing challenge for social media services, they have to constantly develop new ways of guarding against undesirable content and removing it. For example, Twitter recently announced it had improved the possibilities to filter content, developed the reporting process and launched additional training related to cultural and historical contexts for its employees processing reported contents.¹⁷ It is therefore a good idea to regularly check the help and support pages, blogs and other information channels providing information on the relevant online services for possible new functionalities for reacting to undesirable content.

Although most of the problems in tackling hate speech and inappropriate content and the offered solutions (such as blocking and reporting) are shared by all community services, different challenges become emphasised in different services. For example in Facebook, where the majority of the users use their own name, measures related to protecting the user's privacy and personal data are particularly important especially when the user has become a target of undesirable behaviour. The main challenges in Twitter, on the other hand, are related to the opportunities anonymity enables for a direct, aggressive and

wide-ranging spread of hate speech. Media education plays an important role in enabling users – especially young people – to understand the special features of different types of environments, take them into account and adapt their activities accordingly.

Above, we have explained what kind of tools the social media provide for guarding against hate speech and for blocking and countering it online in general. However, especially at the local level, educators and other local actors play the most central role in intervening in and preventing hate speech, online bullying and other inappropriate online behaviour.

In connection with this topic, it is a good idea to familiarise oneself with *Disinformaatio, vihapuhe ja mediakasvatuksen keinot*¹⁸, a recent report published (in Finnish) by Mediakollektiivi and Koulukino. It is a topical and comprehensive overview of the points of view and methods offered by media education for the eradication of hate speech. The publication discusses the roles and responsibilities of different actors (home, school, media, authorities, political actors, culture, etc.) and provides an extensive list of teaching materials and many other types of relevant resources to help to understand the phenomena and to support intervention in them.

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LANGUAGE EDUCATION CREATES AND MEDIATION MENDS INTERACTION

Paula Mattila

Interaction between people is generally linguistic, whether the language be verbal, images or, for example, gestures. Sometimes fists may also do the talking. Social media has added speed and dangerous situations to the power of words. Words can be used to discourage or to encourage and include.

As we know, even clear speech may sometimes fall on deaf ears and pupils may regard what the teacher or the text book says as nonsense. A pupil's communication may include a large amount of not so pleasant traditional Finnish vocabulary or its content or style may seem to be lacking in terms of the objectives of education.

Language has an important role in the reformed national core curricula for basic education and general upper secondary education. Language is also central to the national core curricula for pre-primary education and early childhood education and care.

Language education

The new national core curricula introduce the concepts of language awareness and language education, which include highlighting and valuing the diversity of linguistic and cultural identities and understanding that every child and adult has a plurilingual and culturally diverse background.

The core curricula often touch upon the subject of pupils' need and right to experience authenticity and meaningfulness in their learning. Language education means that issues, texts and exercises that the pupil finds worthwhile are used and discussed in the school culture and in different subjects in a language that is meaningful to the pupil. As a didactic tool language education is so commonplace that teachers often forget they are using it. A teacher with language awareness is able and willing to use linguistic methods to reinforce pupils' experiences of meaningfulness, capability and togetherness.

Teaching and learning require a dialogue in which pupils constantly practise searching for, expressing, questioning and justifying information and their own opinion in a variety of ways. At the same time, practice is required in listening and in the reciprocity of speaking. Language education is cooperative working in which learners are guided to good interaction systematically and in many

different ways. For this purpose, learners learn to give constructive feedback and receive criticism. At the same time, they learn to understand what kind of emotions may be linked to different ways of interaction. They may also learn to think twice before reacting in a potentially unwise manner.

Teachers also submit their own interaction to the demanding and never-ending process of language education. Genuine interaction and the understanding enabled by it can only arise when both the teacher and the pupil commit themselves to it. The teacher is the leader of the learning process and successful interaction is based on the teacher's commitment: willingness to listen to the pupil and, as necessary, explain in different words what the pupil should learn but cannot internalise.

Language education also guides pupils in telling the difference between factual communication and more informal ways of using language. Special attention is paid to strengthening the linguistic abilities of immigrants. In the light of the PISA 2015 results, it is also important to reflect on how language educators should support boys in particular to enable them to do well in their studies and appreciate the membership of the school community and other communities in society.

A teacher who is not familiar with the task of a language educator may unintentionally exclude pupils from learning and from the natural communities at school. This happens if a reciprocal dialogue such as the one described earlier does not develop between them. It is natural for a teacher to sometimes feel too tired or unable to explain his or her message in a language-aware manner or to be too tired or busy to listen to pupils. However, not concentrating on discussions with pupils may create or reinforce feelings of otherness in pupils. Sometimes this opens up the pathway to a marginalisation development and in the saddest cases contributes to violent radicalisation.

Someone from the native population may become radicalised just as easily as a pupil with an immigrant background. Perhaps you are the teacher who always finds the energy to listen to your pupils and see the person inside them even though the communication and behaviour you are faced with is stroppy, loud or indifferent. And if you are also able to exchange the right words of interaction, your simple act of language education may not only reinforce their learning, but also support their trust in people and communities and, in some very extreme cases, even save a human life.

Mediation – interaction that mends

Mediation is very similar to language education. Mediation may also save human lives or at least mend interaction relationships that have deteriorated.

Interaction between pupils at school and around school includes situations in which relationships may sometimes deteriorate for long periods of time.

Pupils call others names, make comments on their appearance, exclude them from groups and threaten them with violence. Peer mediation (VERSO) is a method offering a solution-oriented, practical and interactive way to encounter and resolve conflicts between pupils. Mediation can be used to intervene in problematic activities between pupils as early as possible.

Many of the main features of VERSO can be compared to the mediation of criminal and civil cases in the Finnish legal system. It is voluntary activity and part of the everyday life of the school. The mediators are peers of the parties of the conflict and they have been trained for the task. Like in "ordinary" mediation, pupil mediators are bound by confidentiality and impartiality. Peer mediators steer the parties of the conflict to identify what they can do to avoid problem situations in the future. A written agreement is then concluded on these issues and the school will monitor its realisation. The parties of the conflict themselves put into words what they commit themselves to doing to prevent problem situations from reoccurring. One of the advantages of mediation is that, when successful, it gives both parties a feeling that they can affect bad things themselves and make them right.

Mini-Verso is a version of school mediation that is suitable for early childhood education and care.

The methods used in mediation are in many respects similar to the tools used in language education. In mediation, pupils practice putting their own and other people's experiences and views into words, explaining their backgrounds and questioning and justifying decisions already made as well as future decisions. They practise genuine listening skills and learn to avoid talking over the top of other people. They learn to receive and give feedback, negative as well as positive. When a mediation agreement is drawn up, the aim is to work in cooperation, reflecting on what the parties can do and not do to achieve positive and enduring interaction interaction. At the same time, they learn to understand what kind of emotions may be linked to different ways of interaction and to think twice before reacting in a potentially unwise manner.

Participation, influencing and building a sustainable future (transversal competence 7) are described in the National core curriculum for basic education in the following way: During basic education, pupils "*learn to work together and are offered opportunities to practise negotiation skills, arbitration and conflict resolution as well as critical examination of issues*" (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014).

I work as a voluntary mediator for criminal and civil cases and domestic violence and therefore know the mediation practices in our legal system. I repeatedly see that when something bad has happened, the parties involved need a neutral space in which they can put into words what has happened, the emotions related to it and the consequences. It is equally important for the parties to be allowed to build a lasting way forward themselves, using the words that will also be recorded in the in the mediation agreement.

The parties in the mediation of criminal and civil cases are often pupils from lower secondary school or students from upper secondary education. It is wonderful to see how sometimes even very young people sit up straight, request for a turn to speak and openly explore the background of what has happened and their own and the other party's position in how the situation progresses. Similarly, they are able to put into words their responsibility action by action so that the situation can move on. Asking for forgiveness, forgiving and being forgiven are often part of the mediation process. The most central elements of language education are then present: the meaningfulness of the other person and the other person's thoughts and feelings is acknowledged. The importance of interaction with the other person is understood and responsibility is taken to ensure it will last.

The value of any mediation event will be weighted against what happens afterwards. A mediation agreement is therefore drawn up as necessary and always in schools. In schools, adults enforce compliance with the agreement.

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Mini-Verso (in Finnish) <http://sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/index.php?id=MINIVERSO>

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION (EDC/HRE) PROGRAMME

Kristina Kaihari

The Council of Europe, established in 1949, is the oldest and the largest political cooperation and human rights organisation in Europe. Its basic task is to safeguard and develop human rights, a pluralistic democracy and the rule of law. Binding norms and the monitoring of their implementation are the most important methods in this work. Because education and training has a central role in the promotion of the core values of the Council of Europe, the Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) project was launched in 1997. (<http://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/what-is-edc/hre>)

Education and training is increasingly seen as a way to prevent the rise of violence, racism, extremist movements, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance. The 47 member states of the organisation have therefore adopted the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) in the framework of recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016804884cc>

The Charter, drawn up in jointly by the member states, is an important reference point for everyone engaged in citizenship and human rights education. Although the Charter is non-binding, it is hoped that it will promote human rights in the member states and serve as a method of spreading best practices and improving the standard of the activities across Europe and beyond.

The Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice consisting of representatives of the ministries of education in the member states of the Council of Europe outlines the direction of the activities in the EDC/HRE project according to the decisions made in ministerial meetings. Each member state and at the same time its educational system is represented by an expert appointed by its ministry of education, and the experts together make up a network of coordinators convening once or twice a year. In addition, local and regional networks and headmasters, teachers and other experts have links with the activities. The activities have been developed on the basis of studies, reports and good practices disseminated in regular meetings, development forums, training and a number of thematic publications.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe's Pestalozzi programme for the professional development of teaching staff has for decades offered European workshops and seminars as well as modules for teacher educators with the aim of familiarising the participants better with the operation of the Council, particularly with the core values pursued by it, such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The participants are expected to share and disseminate the information and expertise they have learned. <http://www.coe.int/en/web/pestalozzi>

Central to the implementation of the programme is how the member states promote them in their education policy, curricula and school culture.

The member states of the Council of Europe have diverse democratic systems. In spite of their development needs, democratic values, administration and practices are self-evident in western Europe and especially in the Nordic countries, but for example in Russia, in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc and in the societies in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the implementation of democracy, equality and human rights is faced with challenges that can be considerable. It is therefore important that the representatives of the member states can exchange thoughts, support each other and learn about good ideas, practices and models that they can use in their own countries to promote these issues.

The rise of extremist movements and violent radicalisation over the past few years has strengthened the importance of the Council of Europe. Cooperation with other international actors such as the European Union and UNESCO has intensified. The aim is to strengthen wide-ranging cooperation and partnership in the promotion and practical implementation of human rights education and education for democratic citizenship in the spirit of the Paris declaration (2015).

The *Human Rights in Action* pilot projects launched jointly in 2013 by the European Commission and the Council of Europe are primarily aimed at preventing violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism. The projects are based on peer learning and the development of good democratic practices and models in international cooperation. Several countries and teacher educators, developers and experts from different democracies have been involved in each project.
<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/charter-edc-hre-pilot-projects/home>

The main themes of the *Human Rights in Action* pilot projects between 2016 and 2017 are competences for a democratic culture, digital citizenship and integration of immigrants, refugees and minorities. Central to the projects is the localisation and application of the tools developed in earlier projects to different countries. Such tools include the *Teaching Controversial Issues – Training Pack for Teachers*, developed in cooperation by several countries and published in 2014, and the publication *Competences for Democratic Culture – Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies*, completed in 2016. Both are attached to this publication. Both publications and the *Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent*

Extremism provide teachers with new perspectives and methods for responding to these topical challenges in accordance with the new curriculum.

At the beginning of 2017, the Council of Europe will publish the *Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe* comprising information on how the member states are implementing the *Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education*. In Finland, the survey was coordinated by the Finnish National Agency for Education. In June 2017, the Council of Europe will organise a conference focusing on the results of the report concerned. Based on the results, future developments will also be outlined.

A YOUNG PERSPECTIVE TO RADICALISATION

Matias Salo

This article discusses four upper secondary school students' engagement in the prevention of violent radicalisation after studying the topic for a week. We named our project, or the network we established, Youth Against Violent Extremism (YAVE), but essentially, we are not an official organisation. Rather, the network is an attempt by a few attentive youths to make society a better place. This article focuses on two aspects of our journey. The first, pedagogical section explains how we ended up thinking and doing what we do. The second section discusses our ideas and solutions for preventing violent radicalisation.

Our story began in the June of 2016. We participated in Demos Helsinki's camp called Safari. The idea of the week-long camp was to provide youths with a societal challenge for which they could try to come up with solutions. Our group was tasked with the Ministry of the Interior's and Finn Church Aid's commission to prevent violent radicalisation. Quite a light and easy task for a bunch of youths.

There are many ways to approach societal problem solving. We chose to tackle the issue by delving into its root causes and by defining it clearly. Social discourse and decision-making should be based on understanding the context and the root causes of the issue in question. If this is not the case, the discussion easily becomes meaningless argumentation marked by fallacies. The following presents our definition of the problem:

What? Violent radicalisation is violent activity justified either politically, ideologically, religiously or by a single cause (e.g. school shooting).

Why? Violent radicalisation is primarily caused by the following background factors:

1. Exclusion and the feeling of not belonging
2. Broken family background
3. Conception of justified violence [Experiences of injustice, such as racism or institutional discrimination, strengthen the conception. In addition, it is affected by the 'us vs. them dynamic', lack of encounter and dialogue. In the background, there is a sense of protecting one's reference group or defending against a "threat", a belief that one's worldview, ideology or religion is superior in terms of public well-being.]
4. Negative future prospects and weak academic success (lack of education, not having a study place, bad employment situation, bad involvement opportunities, lack of communities and being excluded)

To whom? Violent radicalisation does not cause problems only to the radicalised individual or target group. It has long-term consequences for communities and the larger society.

In addition to understanding and defining the problem, creating a fruitful atmosphere for ideation is central to exercises such as this. Our experience was that we were able to approach violent radicalisation in an uninhibited manner. We, the youths, were treated as experts. We did not work to fill up a larger “grown-up project”. Instead, we solved genuine problems using “real world solutions” for ourselves, the youth. From youth, to youth.

In the Safari process flow chart, understanding was followed by creative ideation. Confidence in our own ability to solve problems combined with the freedom in solution definition enabled creating a coherent range of solutions. At first, the creative ideas were only theories, but in the end, they were developed into concrete, presentable solutions. Naturally, the project’s end phase involved presenting the created solutions to a crowd. Smooth communication of one’s ideas is an essential part of any creative process. Ideas are dead unless they are shared with the world.

Our work did not really begin until after the week-long camp in June. Apparently, we had succeeded in making a positive impression on people. We started collaborating with various parties immediately. Several suggested solutions that we considered self-evident were completely new ideas to many representatives of older generations. People view the world from within their own frameworks. Therefore, it is nearly an intrinsic value to take the youth perspective into account in societal decision-making. After all, it is quite difficult for a 50-year-old official to put themselves into an upper secondary school student’s shoes. Listening to the youth would provide decision-makers with new viewpoints almost naturally, and we represent the new viewpoints.

After several planning meetings, our journey took us to the Ministry of the Interior to sit at the same table with ministers and finally, to participate in the EU’s projects. Thus, it is reasonable to shed some light on what we have proposed and emphasised along the way. Rather than focusing on a single matter, we have proposed a wide range of solutions. We have a natural explanation for this wide-ranging approach: Violent radicalisation is characterised by exclusion, lack of prospects, depression and many other problems that have always ailed society. Thus, the solutions should not be viewed only in relation to violent radicalisation. Instead, they apply to a much larger societal context.

Education-related solutions primarily focus on societal education and media literacy. In our opinion, a student’s first experience of societal involvement should come from studying the Finnish political spectrum or the doctrine of the separation of powers in a social studies class. Before teaching a student how society works in theory, they must understand that they are an essential part

of society. This involves, for example, teaching fact-based argumentation and familiarising students with various channels of involvement. In addition, actual teaching that involves societal topics should be started much earlier than now. Involvement should not be a boring, bureaucratic job for a select few. Instead, everyone should have a voice.

Another thing we have given a lot of thought is media literacy. As the media field is in a constant state of fragmentation, source criticism and understanding biased media have become more important than ever before. For example, teaching based on case studies should be emphasised. The earlier media literacy education begins, the better. In addition to source criticism, teaching things such as internet etiquette would be positive.

Our group has given a lot of thought on how people react to situations in which a close person may radicalise. For a friend or a relative, there is a high threshold in contacting the police directly to report a close person who may have lost the way. In Finland, there are good and competent operators who can help people in situations such as this. However, the problem is that it might not be easy to find them. There should be an online service that would provide advice in this type of difficult situations. Simultaneously, the service would serve as a platform for collecting information relating to violent radicalisation. It would be important to provide information on the different types of radicalisation. The information should not focus only on religious radicalisation, but also on political and single-cause activities.

In the end, the best way to prevent radicalisation and exclusion is to offer opportunities. A youth should never have to find themselves in a situation in which they feel that they do not have any future prospects. If a youth experiences lack of prospects, various corrupt ideologies may start to seem sensible, and violence may appear as a potential form of influencing society.

Our advice to students is that if they have an idea or if they are interested in making a difference, they should courageously start working on it. We did not know that there was a call for our work before we started doing it. Being courageous and highlighting new viewpoints is always worth it. Another thing we wish to emphasise is engaging youths and believing in their capabilities. We do not think that school should always be about a teacher imposing a premise for teaching and directing students to a certain end result. Creativity should be given room – we consider the increasing emphasis on phenomenon-based learning a positive development. Societal problem-solving is one of the best ways to learn. It builds fact-based, concrete solutions that are likely to increase interest towards society. Furthermore, it helps understand large concepts in a new way. The youth should be allowed to participate, and room should be given to their creativity. The results may be surprising!

IMPORTANT LINKS

<http://ahtisaariipaiva.fi/>

The teaching material for the Ahtisaari Days includes six themes: Negotiation skills, Communication and empathy, Participation and making a difference, Peace mediation, Conflict resolution roleplay and Finland and present day conflicts

<http://www.asemanlapset.fi/fi/toimintamuotomme/friends> (in Finnish)

The Friends programme teaches children and young people to recognise and process emotions, encourages positive thinking models and provides coping methods for dealing with setbacks and disappointments

<https://www.mll.fi/kasvattajille/tukioppilastoiminta/>

Material published by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare to support peer support and mentoring activities

<http://www.koulurauha.fi/> (in Finnish)

A joint programme of the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, the National Police Board of Finland, Folkhälsan and Suomen Vanhempainliitto, aimed at promoting wellbeing and safety in the school community. Activities for schools and pre-primary education with the theme Everyone is valuable

<http://www.rauhankasvatus.fi/opettajille/yhdenvertaisuusopas/> (in Finnish)

Koulu vailla vertaa! is a guide to equality for schools

<http://www.ssf-ffm.com/vertaissovittelu/>

Restorative mediation is an alternative way to solve conflicts between students and between teachers and students in the everyday life of schools

<https://www.vaestoliitto.fi/monikulttuurisuus/tietoa-monikulttuurisuudesta/aineistot/> (in Finnish)

Material on issues related to cultural diversity

<http://www.rauhankasvatus.fi/opettajille/yhdenvertaisuusopas/> (in Finnish)

Koulu vailla vertaa! is a guide to equality for schools

<http://www.asemanlapset.fi/fi/toimintamuotomme/friends> (in Finnish)

The Friends programme teaches children and young people to recognise and process emotions, encourages positive thinking models and provides coping methods for dealing with setbacks and disappointments

<https://www.vaestoliitto.fi/monikulttuurisuus/tietoa-monikulttuurisuudesta/aineistot/> (in Finnish)

Material on issues related to cultural diversity

<https://www.mll.fi/kasvattajille/>

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare produces materials on media education, substance abuse education, health education and bullying prevention

<https://www.lastensivut.fi/> (in Finnish)

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children has published a new website targeted at primary school pupils. The website tells about children's rights through different characters and stories. In addition, services provided by non-governmental organisations which children can turn to about issues they are worried about have been compiled on the website. The website also includes a lot of information for adults who help children in their work.

<https://www.unicef.fi/koulut/ihmisoikeus-ja-globaalikasvatusmateriaalit/>

With UNICEF's material for human rights and global education you can discuss children's rights as part of learning and teaching. The materials deal with children's rights through perspectives related to the environment, water, health, education and equality.

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APPENDICES

Competences for Democratic Culture

Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies (Summary)

This document describes a conceptual model of the competences which need to be acquired by learners if they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse democratic societies. It is intended that the model will be used to inform educational decision making and planning, helping educational systems to be harnessed for the preparation of learners for life as competent democratic citizens.

The document is divided into seven chapters.

In Chapter 1, the educational purpose of the competence model is outlined. This section also explains why the phrase “culture of democracy” is used in the present context rather than “democracy”: this is to emphasise the fact that, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, such institutions and laws cannot work in practice unless they are grounded in a culture of democracy, that is, in democratic values, attitudes and practices. Chapter 1 also explains the interdependence between a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue in culturally diverse societies: in such societies, intercultural dialogue is vital to ensure the inclusion of all citizens in democratic discussion, debate and deliberation.

Chapters 2 and 3 describe some of the background assumptions underlying the model. Chapter 2 describes the assumption that, while it is necessary for citizens to acquire a range of competences in order to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, these competences are not sufficient for such participation to occur because democratic participation also requires appropriate institutional structures. In other words, both competences and democratic institutions are essential to sustain a culture of democracy. In addition, the democratic participation of all citizens within society requires measures to tackle social inequalities and structural disadvantages. In the absence of such measures, the members of disadvantaged groups will be marginalised in democratic processes, whatever their levels of democratic competence might be.

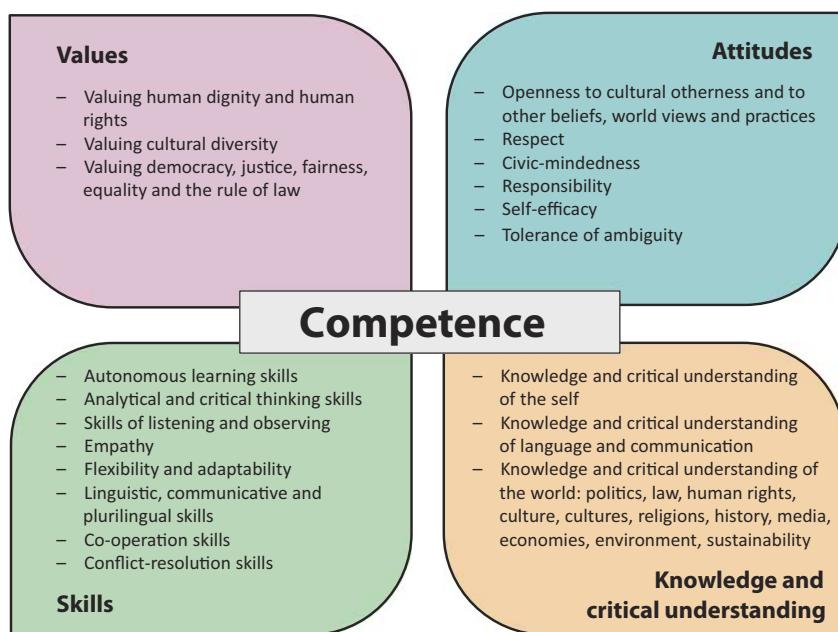
Chapter 3 describes the concept of “culture” that is assumed by the competence model. All cultures are internally heterogeneous, contested, dynamic and constantly evolving, and all people inhabit multiple cultures that interact in complex ways. The concept of “intercultural” is also examined in this section. It is proposed that intercultural situations arise when an individual perceives another person or group as being culturally different from themselves. Intercultural dialogue is therefore defined as dialogue that takes place between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other. It is noted that, although intercultural dialogue is extremely important for fostering tolerance and enhancing social cohesion in culturally diverse societies, such dialogue can be extremely demanding and difficult in some circumstances.

Chapter 4 then unpacks the concept of “competence” that is employed by the model. Democratic and intercultural competence is defined as the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations. Competence is treated as a dynamic process in which a competent individual mobilises and deploys clusters of psychological resources in an active and adaptive manner in order to respond to new circumstances as these arise.

Chapter 4 also describes how, in addition to this global and holistic use of the term “competence” (in the singular), the term “competences” (in the plural) is used in the current document to refer to the specific individual resources (i.e. the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding) that are mobilised and deployed in the production of competent behaviour. In other words, in the present account, competence consists of the selection, activation and organisation of competences and the application of these competences in a co-ordinated, adaptive and dynamic manner to concrete situations.

Chapter 5 describes the working method through which specific competences were identified for inclusion in the current model. A notable feature of the model is that it was not designed from scratch. Instead, it was grounded in a systematic analysis of existing conceptual schemes of democratic competence and intercultural competence. An audit was conducted through which 101 such schemes were identified. These 101 schemes were decomposed to identify all the individual competences which they contained, and these competences were then grouped into cognate sets. This led to the identification of 55 possible competences for inclusion in the model. In order to assist in reducing this list of competences to a more manageable and practical length, a set of principled criteria and pragmatic considerations was used to identify the key competences which needed to be included within the model. The application of these criteria and considerations led to the identification of 20 competences for inclusion in the model: 3 sets of values, 6 attitudes, 8 skills and 3 bodies of knowledge and critical understanding. These competences were used to construct the model. A draft document describing the model was then produced and circulated in an international consultation exercise involving academic experts, educational practitioners and policy makers. The responses received in the consultation strongly endorsed the model but also provided a range of useful feedback. The feedback was used to fine-tune the details of the model and to guide the writing of the current document.

The 20 competences included in the model



Chapter 6 describes the resulting model in full, by listing and describing all of the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding which enable an individual to participate effectively and appropriately in a culture of democracy. The model is summarised in the diagram above, while a full list of the 20 competences, together with a summary description of each competence, is provided in the box below.

Chapter 7 concludes the document by noting two hopes for the current model: that it will prove useful for educational decision making and planning, and that it will assist in the empowerment of young people as autonomous social agents capable of choosing and pursuing their own goals in life within the framework that is provided by democratic institutions and respect for human rights.

Appendix A provides a list of the sources of the 101 competence schemes that were audited by the project. Appendix B provides a list of the 55 possible competences that were identified across the 101 schemes. Appendix C provides some suggestions for further reading beyond the references that are listed in Appendix A.

A summary list of the competences which enable an individual to participate effectively and appropriately in a culture of democracy

Values

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, 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 which 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 judgment 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 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

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 and critical thinking skills are the skills required to analyse, evaluate and make judgments 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 so 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 own 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.

A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of VIOLENT EXTREMISM



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Table of Contents

Foreword	5
Acknowledgements.....	7
1. Introduction	9
2. About violent extremism.....	11
2.1. Violent extremism and radicalization	11
2.2. Violent extremism and education	14
2.3. Local manifestations of extremism.....	16
2.4. Role of the community, family and media	18
3. Managing the classroom discussion.....	19
3.1. Objectives.....	19
3.2. Preparation.....	22
3.3. Discussion	24
3.4. Topics to address violent extremism	31
3.5. Debriefing and following up	33

4. Key messages to deliver	35
4.1. Solidarity.....	35
4.2. Respect for diversity	36
4.3. Human rights	37
4.4. Learning to live together	39
4.5. Young people's engagement.....	40
Annex	41
Frequently asked questions	41
References.....	45

Foreword

This is UNESCO's first *Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism* through education. This document has been developed in direct response to the needs of UNESCO's Member States as expressed in the landmark 197/EX Decision 46 taken by UNESCO's Executive Board in October 2015¹, which calls on the Organization to enhance its capacity to provide assistance to countries as they work to strengthen their education sector responses to violent extremism, including through human-rights-based Global Citizenship Education (GCED) programmes, keeping in mind national contexts.

As such, this Guide also constitutes UNESCO's first contribution to the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism², as it relates to the Education Sector.

Along with this Guide, technical guidance is currently being developed by the Organization for education policy-makers within ministries of education. This guidance seeks to provide countries with a set of resources that can help build and reinforce national capacities to address the drivers of violent extremism through holistic and pragmatic education sector-wide responses.

1 Decision 46 adopted at the 197th session of UNESCO's Executive Board (197 EX/Decision 46), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002351/235180e.pdf>

2 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674) http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf

In order to ensure the relevance of this Teacher's Guide in different geographical and socio-cultural contexts, it was developed after an extensive consultation process with experts and teachers from different regions as well as field-tested by educational stakeholders in selected countries.

As such, it can be used as it is, or considered as a prototype to be further contextualized, adapted and translated in order to respond to the specific needs of learners.

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

Violent extremism and the underlying forces of radicalization are among the most pervasive challenges of our time. While violent extremism is not confined to any age, sex, group or community, young people are particularly vulnerable to the messages of violent extremists and terrorist organizations.

In the face of such threats, young people need relevant and timely learning opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that can help them build their resilience to such propaganda.

These competencies can be developed with the help of confident, well-prepared and respected teachers, who are in extensive contact with young people.

With this concern in mind, this Guide was designed for teachers in upper primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. It was also developed with the hope that it can support the efforts of teachers working in both formal and non-formal educational settings.

More specifically, this Guide seeks to:

- ▶ Provide practical advice on when and how to discuss the issue of violent extremism and radicalization with learners,
- ▶ Help teachers create a classroom climate that is inclusive and conducive to respectful dialogue, open discussion and critical thinking.

2. About violent extremism

2.1 VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION

Violent extremism refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically-motivated violence to achieve radical ideological, religious or political views³.

Violent extremist views can be exhibited along a range of issues, including politics, religion and gender relations. No society, religious community or worldview is immune to such violent extremism⁴.

Violent Extremism is . . . “when you do not allow for a different point of view; when you hold your own views as being quite exclusive, when you don’t allow for the possibility of difference and when you want to impose this view on others using violence if necessary.”⁵

3 www.livingsafetogether.gov.au and www.dhs.gov/topic/countering-violent-extremism

4 The following website provides different examples of violent extremism, www.livingsafetogether.gov.au

5 Davies, L. 2008. Education Against Extremism, *Stoke on Trent and Sterling*. Trentham Books.
<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cld/UserFiles/File/DAVIESeducationagainstextremism.pdf>

Though “radicalization” is a contested term to some, it has come to be used to define the process through which an individual or a group considers violence as a legitimate and a desirable means of action.

Radical thought that does not condone the exercise of violence to further political goals may be seen as normal and acceptable, and be promoted by groups working within the boundaries of the law.

There is no single profile or pathway for radicalization, or even speed at which it happens.⁶ Nor does the level of education seem to be a reliable predictor of vulnerability to radicalization. It is however established that there are socio-economic, psychological and institutional factors⁷ that lead to violent extremism. Specialists group these factors into two main categories:

- ▶ **“Push Factors”** drive individuals to violent extremism, such as: marginalization, inequality, discrimination, persecution or the perception thereof; limited access to quality and relevant education; the denial of rights and civil liberties; and other environmental, historical and socio-economic grievances.
- ▶ **“Pull Factors”** nurture the appeal of violent extremism, for example: the existence of well-organized violent extremist groups with compelling discourses and effective programmes that are providing services, revenue and/or employment in exchange for membership. Groups can also lure new members by providing outlets for grievances and promise of adventure and freedom. Furthermore, these groups appear to offer spiritual comfort, “a place to belong” and a supportive social network.

6 Davies, L. 2008. Educating Against Extremism: Towards a Critical Politicisation of Young People. *International Review of Education*, 55 (2/3), pp. 183-203. doi:10.1007/s11159-008-9126-8

7 USAID, *Summary of Factors Affecting Violent Extremism*. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAA929.pdf; Zeiger, S. and Aly, A. 2015. *Countering violent extremism: developing an evidence-base for policy and practice*. Curtin University, Hedayah.

Finally, there are **contextual factors** that provide a favourable terrain to the emergence of violent extremist groups, such as: fragile states, the lack of rule of law, corruption and criminality.

EXAMPLES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan, eco-terrorism, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Boko Haram.



EARLY SIGNS

The following behaviours can be signs of radicalization. If several are observed, the family and immediate circle should be alerted.

- ▶ Sudden break with the family and long-standing friendships.
- ▶ Sudden drop-out of school and conflicts with the school.
- ▶ Change in behaviour relating to food, clothing, language, finances.
- ▶ Changes in attitudes and behaviour towards others: antisocial comments, rejection of authority, refusal to interact socially, signs of withdrawal and isolation.
- ▶ Regular viewing of internet sites and participation in social media networks that condone radical or extremist views.
- ▶ Reference to apocalyptic and conspiracy theories.

Source : <http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/>

2.2 VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND EDUCATION

The role of education in preventing violent extremism and de-radicalizing young people has only recently gained global acceptance.

An important step in this direction was the launch, in December 2015, of the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism⁸, which recognizes the importance of quality education to address the drivers of this phenomenon.

The United Nations Security Council also emphasized this point in its Resolutions 2178⁹ and 2250, which notably highlights the need for "*quality education for peace that equips youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and inclusive political processes*" and called on "*all relevant actors to consider instituting mechanisms to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue that involve youth and discourage their participation in acts of violence, terrorism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination.*"¹⁰

In October 2015, UNESCO's Executive Board adopted a Decision¹¹ that unequivocally affirms the importance of education as a tool to help prevent terrorism and violent extremism, as well as racial and religious intolerance, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity worldwide. Whether provided through schools, clubs and community associations or at home, education is indeed acknowledged as an important component of a societal commitment to curb and prevent the rise of violent extremism.

8 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674) http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf

9 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178, adopted in September 2014, http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf

10 UN Security Council Resolution 2250, adopted in December 2015, <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/SCR-2250.pdf>

11 Decision 46 adopted at the 197th session of UNESCO's Executive Board (197 EX/Decision 46) <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002351/235180e.pdf>

These documents underline that education can...

- ▶ Help young people develop the communication and interpersonal skills they need to dialogue, face disagreement and learn peaceful approaches to change.
- ▶ Help learners develop their critical thinking to investigate claims, verify rumours and question the legitimacy and appeal of extremist beliefs.
- ▶ Help learners develop the resilience to resist extremist narratives and acquire the social-emotional skills they need to overcome their doubts and engage constructively in society without having to resort to violence.
- ▶ Foster critically informed citizens able to constructively engage in peaceful collective action.

For UNESCO, this is possible notably through Global Citizenship Education (GCED), which seeks to nurture a sense of belonging to a common humanity as well as genuine respect for all.

WHAT IS GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP?

Global citizenship refers to a sense of belonging to the global community and common humanity, with its members experiencing solidarity and collective identity among themselves and collective responsibility at the global level.

GCED is an emerging approach to education that focuses on developing learners' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in view of their active participation in the peaceful and sustainable development of their societies. GCED is about instilling respect for human rights, social justice, gender equality and environmental sustainability, which are fundamental values that help raise the defences of peace against violent extremism.¹²

¹² Global Citizenship Education – Topics and Learning Objectives, UNESCO, 2015, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002329/232993e.pdf> and Global Citizenship Education - Preparing learners for the challenges of the twenty-first century, UNESCO, 2014, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002277/227729e.pdf>

2.3 LOCAL MANIFESTATIONS OF EXTREMISM

Since many learners may be poorly connected to, or misinformed about, international events, there are many benefits to discussing local manifestations of violent extremism in addition to, or instead of, international forms of the phenomena.

Discussing local manifestations of violent extremism...

- ▶ Helps learners understand the connections between local and global challenges.
- ▶ Helps them understand the real risks and consequences of violent extremism.
- ▶ Finally, it demonstrates to young people that they can make a difference if they make the right choices within their immediate context.

There are, however, **some important prerequisites** to discussing controversial local issues:

- ▶ Connecting the issue of violent extremism to content in the local curriculum,
- ▶ Understanding the social, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of the local context,
- ▶ Including minority-group perspectives in the discussions – or at least ensuring that their views are represented, so young people are offered a balanced view of issues,
- ▶ Being very clear to learners about your own role as the moderator (objective voice, “devil’s advocate”, impartial facilitator, etc.),
- ▶ Identifying the right timing, since controversial issues should not be discussed haphazardly.

In some cases, discussing local manifestations of extremism can be too complex and sensitive. In these circumstances, it can be more productive to introduce the subject through an example that is far removed from the challenges faced by local learners.

EXAMPLE

UNESCO and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum developed in 2015 a new training programme entitled *Conference for International Holocaust Education* to assist education stakeholders from all parts of the world in developing new pedagogies using education about the Holocaust as a prism to tackle their own traumatic past of genocide and crimes against humanity. This approach has proven particularly effective for communities that have suffered mass atrocities.

2.4 ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY, FAMILY AND MEDIA

Preventing violent extremism through education should be part of a broader prevention effort in which the family, community and media are involved. Building support and care networks that enhance these domains increases the likelihood of having a positive impact and develops the well-being of the community, without focusing on surveillance alone.

EXAMPLES OF CROSS-CUTTING COMMUNITY PROJECTS:

- ▶ **Project Exit** – Founded by the Norwegian government, it had three primary objectives: to establish local networks to support the parents of children embedded in racist or violent groups; to enable young people to disengage from these groups; and to develop and disseminate methodological knowledge to professionals working with youths associated with violent groups. The project involved collaboration between parents, child welfare officers, police, teachers and local youth workers.
<https://www.counterextremism.org/resources/details/id/665/project-exit-leaving-violent-groups>
- ▶ **Women Without Borders** – An Austrian NGO that empowers mothers and families in various countries to detect early signs of radicalization and confront the influence of factors that can lead youngsters to violent extremism.
www.women-without-borders.org
- ▶ **Connect Justice** – An independent UK-based social enterprise that creates community-led solutions for social justice. The operational focus is building trust and collaboration between communities, civil society, state agencies and the private sector around extremism and exploitation.
<http://www.connectjustice.org>

3. Managing the classroom discussion

3.1 OBJECTIVES

A discussion on violent extremism should seek to reinforce as much as possible the full range of skills that enable learners to participate more generally in civic life as informed global citizens.

This implies ensuring that the learning objectives cover the following three domains of learning: the cognitive, the socio-emotional and the behavioural.

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES BY DOMAINS OF LEARNING

DOMAINS OF LEARNING	LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF THE DISCUSSION Learners should	LEARNER ATTRIBUTES, or traits and qualities, to be enhanced through the discussion
COGNITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop skills for critical thinking and analysis ▶ Acquire knowledge and understanding of local, national and global issues and the interconnectedness and interdependency of different countries and populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recognizes forms of manipulation ▶ Aware of stereotypes, prejudices and preconceptions and their impact ▶ Able to distinguish between fact and opinion and question their sources ▶ Informed about the different facets of violent extremism and other global issues ▶ Understands that these issues are complex
SOCIO-EMOTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Experience a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities based on human rights ▶ Develop attitudes of empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity ▶ Develop inter-cultural competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Shares a core set of values based on human rights ▶ Is respectful of diversity ▶ Able to recognize emotions that are experienced by another person ▶ Is interested in understanding different people, lifestyles and cultures ▶ Has the ability to "effectively and appropriately interact with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself "¹³

¹³ Intercultural Competences – Conceptual and Operational Framework, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002197/219768e.pdf>

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES BY DOMAINS OF LEARNING

DOMAINS OF LEARNING	LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF THE DISCUSSION Learners should	LEARNER ATTRIBUTES, or traits and qualities, to be enhanced through the discussion
BEHAVIOURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Act effectively and responsibly during the conversation▶ Express oneself with self-confidence and address conflict positively▶ Develop a motivation and willingness to take necessary actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Able to listen with respect to different points of view; to express one's own opinions; and to evaluate both▶ Expresses a wish to take responsible action

3.2 PREPARATION

■ WHY PREPARE?

- ▶ Advance preparation reduces the fear of discussing controversial topics when the opportunity appears.
- ▶ An important aspect of the preparation is the development of a rationale for the discussion that clearly outlines the educational benefits of the experience.

■ WHAT TO PREPARE?

- ▶ The learning objectives, topic/entry point, discussion approach and the key content messages that should be transmitted through the conversation should be identified well in advance.
- ▶ Necessary permissions are useful, as the role of the school directors and administrators is critical in providing support for introducing these topics. Depending on the context, it may be necessary to get feedback or even obtain approval from the students.
- ▶ It can also be helpful to review information materials on the topic before the discussion, in order to address misconceptions and myths, by providing facts.



TIPS

- ▶ Anticipate challenges and opportunities for discussion.
- ▶ It can help to hold conversations with other adults in the school and local community, such as parents, and other educators about how to approach the subject of violent extremism.
- ▶ Do not engage in a conversation if you do not feel emotionally and professionally ready to do so.
- ▶ Visualize one of your students and imagine the conversation before it happens.
- ▶ Depending on the composition of each school/community, it may be beneficial to invite to class people from different backgrounds than those of the typical student and staff member.
- ▶ If necessary, it could also be helpful to bring in a professional specialized in mediation to offer support for particularly sensitive discussions.

3.3 DISCUSSION

WHEN TO DISCUSS?

Identifying the right moment and entry point to address violent extremism in the classroom requires preparation and forethought.

While lessons and discussions can be pre-planned and implemented as part of the day's lesson, other entry points for discussion may occur on the spur of the moment. These are "teachable moments". They can come when least expected. They are unplanned opportunities that should be seized to explain a difficult concept or start a conversation that will relate this topic to the experiences of learners.

Teachable moments can be missed opportunities if teachers are not prepared both personally and professionally to make good use of them.



TIPS

One of the most important skills a teacher can possess is the ability to recognize and use “teachable moments” to develop a safe and trusting environment. It is the ideal time to teach an important lesson¹⁴. Teachable moments can happen almost anywhere and anytime: on the way to school, in the playground, in the school cafeteria, and in the classroom.

- Teachers may not have time to fully review the rules and guidelines for a teachable moment discussion with students. A teachable moment discussion often follows an incident that provoked it. You can prepare students by regularly participating in discussions and dialogue in the classroom in anticipation of these unplanned moments of inspiration.
- A teachable moment discussion may focus on values as well as academic learning skills.
- Be observant and a good listener. Some teachable moments are not as apparent as others.
- Be creative. A teachable moment discussion can also arise out of negative experiences. If a child calls another child a “terrorist” or another bad name, use the incident to teach about name-calling, respect and violent extremism.
- Teachers can use these conversations starters to begin a teachable moment discussion in the classroom.
 - a. “What has just happened here? Why did this happen?”
 - b. “Someone did something nice today for someone else. Who can guess what was done?”

¹⁴ Ballenger, C. 2009. *Puzzling moments, teachable moments: Practicing teacher research in urban classrooms*. New York, Teachers College Press (Practitioner Inquiry Series, 1st edition.)

- c. "Let's talk about respect today."
 - d. "Why do you think it is important that we discuss what happened in class today?"
- End the teachable moment discussion:
- a. What did we learn today? Why was it important to have this discussion?
 - b. Next, engage the class in a fun activity like sports or drama to enhance friendliness and cooperation, especially if the teachable moment discussion was brought about by a negative experience.
 - c. Make yourself available to students and parents for unresolved feelings, questions or comments after the discussion.
-

■ WHAT ARE THE GROUND RULES?

Whether a discussion is pre-planned or not, it is important to develop ground rules that allow it to flourish in a safe and respectful learning environment.

One way to build a community in the classroom is for teachers and learners to develop together a list of ground rules to guide the discussion process.

After all the rules have been proposed, only those agreed upon by the majority of the classroom should be adopted. Review and post the ground rules before the discussion.

EXAMPLES OF GROUND RULES FOR THE DISCUSSION

1. Listen carefully in a non-judgemental manner, with an open mind.
2. Ask for clarification when you do not understand something.
3. Critique or question comments, ideas or positions, not the person making them.
4. Be willing to accept feedback or criticism of your ideas.
5. Demonstrate tolerance of other's viewpoints that are different from your own.
6. Use respectful non-inflammatory language. Avoid words that are politically charged, or violent in their meaning.
7. Consider others' positions, feelings and perspectives on the issue.
8. Share the stage by taking turns speaking and by not interrupting others.
9. Include everyone in the discussion, especially those who might lack confidence or willingness to speak.
10. Stay on topic and keep your comments brief.

■ HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS?

As the facilitator, provide the model for asking and answering questions to help guide learners in the discussion. Ask probing and critical questions that help learners explore alternative viewpoints.

Giving examples of such questioning should eventually lead your learners to do it without any prompting.

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE USED TO CLARIFY THE STATEMENTS MADE BY STUDENTS

1. Can you explain what you mean by that as I did not understand?
 2. Can you give an example of that?
 3. What is fact and opinion in this statement?
 4. How do you know that....? On what do you base your judgement?
 5. What might logically follow from that argument or statement?
 6. How does your example tie in with what we learned today?
 7. What is the difference between.....and ...?
 8. Can you please explain why you think this is important?
 9. Is there another point of view on that issue?
-

■ HOW TO BE A NON-JUDGEMENTAL LISTENER?

Young people yearn for opportunities to discuss issues with a non-judgemental listener. They are brimming with ideas, some reasonable and some less so. They need someone to listen to their ideas, suggest other ways of thinking and help visualize reasonable decisions that take into account important longer-term consequences.

- Avoid condemning or prejudging learner's voices, concerns, actions or intentions during the discussion ("you can't say that"; "you can't think that").
- Avoid positioning yourself as the main authority on the subject. Rather, be a facilitator and make sure that pluralistic views and arguments are reflected in the discussion.
- Try not to interrupt students as they develop their arguments. On the contrary, help them find the words to express their thoughts.
- Provide sensible and respectful suggestions of issues to consider, including moral and ethical consequences of decisions.
- Take care not to over-interpret controversial or racist comments as signs of violent extremism.



TIPS

- ▶ **Stay focused** - Keep the discussion focused on the topic and learning objectives. If the discussion strays into other areas, it will weaken its quality. The facilitator's role is to steer the discussion back on track when it drifts off course, to make sure the learning objectives are met.
- ▶ **Model respectful, civil behaviour through your own actions** - Learners will observe your behaviour and modify their behaviour accordingly. If the facilitator speaks with respect and care in the context of the dialogue, students and learners will emulate this behaviour. Observe discussion rules. Smile when appropriate. Avoid interrupting people and require students and learners to allow a speaker to finish before another begins. Do not assign blame, openly disagree or admonish.
- ▶ **Watch for aggressive verbal and non-verbal behaviour** during the discussion. If it is observed, respond appropriately according to the agreed upon rules and consequences. If the behaviour persists, it is advisable to continue the discussion at another time. A proactive approach is best to deal with aggressiveness. Help learners visualize an effective discussion by role-playing and modelling active listening strategies.
- ▶ **Encourage and positively reinforce constructive engagement** in the dialogue.
- ▶ **Encourage the students to write about their feelings and experiences** – either in a journal or in a letter – to help them reflect more deeply on the topic discussed and collect their emotions.

HOW TO ENSURE THAT ALL PERSPECTIVES ARE HEARD?

- ▶ It is critical to structure the discussion in such a way that everyone is given an opportunity to speak and no one person, group, or viewpoint dominates the conversation. You can avoid excessive teacher talk and make sure that all voices are heard by utilizing a strategy called *respond and bounce*. Respond to a question or statement by learners but then “bounce” or “toss a ball out” to one or more students and learners.
- ▶ It is important to ensure that no groups are excluded from the discussion and all girls and boys and minority groups are included in the discussion and feel safe to participate.
- ▶ It is important to help learners understand that many of the world’s problems are complex and multifaceted. The issues raised may not have a clear “right or wrong” answer, but contain many complexities, shades of meaning and ambiguity.

3.4 TOPICS TO ADDRESS VIOLENT EXTREMISM

There are many subjects that can bring about a fruitful discussion on violent extremism. The challenge is to frame the subject in a way that helps learners to explore their own values and opinions and to manage their emotional responses, while getting a better understanding of the underlying narratives of extreme ideologies.

One can consider, among other subjects :

- ▶ **Citizenship** - to allow learners to address issues of rights and responsibilities in diverse societies, justice, identity, and the notion of “belonging”. The topic also offers opportunity to debate fundamental human rights principles, including freedom of expression, and to identify and counter hate speech.
- ▶ **History** - notably education about the history of genocide and mass atrocities, such as the Holocaust, to engage students in reflection about the power of hate propaganda and the roots of racism, antisemitism and political violence. It also allows learners to explore how historical narratives are constructed and how they can perpetuate conflict and prejudice in their own society.
- ▶ **Religion and beliefs** - to foster awareness about, and respect for, diversity within the community and provide opportunity to explore different values and beliefs, thus challenging prejudice and racism. This should include discussion of secularism and humanism, to counter myths about secularism as being the same as atheism¹⁵ and mistrust of “non-believers”. It should be stressed that believers in a particular religion should not be stereotyped as all the same, when there is often more diversity within a religion than across religions. It is also important to include those students who do not hold religious beliefs.

¹⁵ See Davies, L. 2014. *Unsafe Gods: Security, secularism and schooling*. London, IOE/Trentham.

- ▶ **Languages** - to help learners discover a wide range of cultures, values and viewpoints on world history and thought. Besides developing core skills of writing and oral argumentation, it will also contribute to develop media literacy.
- ▶ **Freedom of expression and the internet** - to explore with learners how information is offered, structured and relayed; how it can be manipulated for violent purposes; and how new sources of information compete with professional media. Addressing online media literacy will help learners use the internet and social media in a safe and effective way. This can be linked with citizenship education on human rights and the difference between lawful free speech and hate speech.
- ▶ **Gender equality and gender-based violence** - to help understand the root cause of the problem; challenge certain attitudes about the status and role of women; and empower boys and girls alike to take constructive, non-violent action against extremist arguments promoting violence, notably against girls and women.
- ▶ **Art** - to promote understanding and valuing of diverse peoples, cultures and artistic expressions different from one's own. Art can be seen as a universal language binding communities and cultures over time and space. It offers the possibility of debating how the denial and destruction of cultural and artistic heritage due to violent extremism is a loss for all humanity.

3.5 DEBRIEFING AND FOLLOWING UP

After a discussion on violent extremism with students, teachers need to make sure there are no misunderstandings and unresolved tensions between learners. This implies taking the time to review together what was understood and learned from the exchange. This is also the time to identify unsettled issues that require in-depth and/or follow-up activities.

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS:

What did you learn, what do you still have questions about? Are we any closer to understanding processes leading to radicalization of youth? What else do we need to know to better understand violent extremism? How might we continue the discussion?

If the discussion was especially heated, it may be advisable to follow up with learners individually to thank them for participating in the discussion and reassure them that they are entitled to their views as long as they are respectful of others.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS can assist learners in reflecting on the experience.

How do people show respect for others' ideas, even if they disagree? Is there anything you will do differently after this conversation?

Teachers might also consider incorporating a few extension activities that give learners an opportunity to further the discussion.

EXAMPLES OF EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Organize small group and pair discussions to be monitored very carefully, and abide by the same rules as the whole-group discussion.
- ▶ Be available to learners and families for confidential discussions.
- ▶ Talking heads panel: this follow-up activity requires that learners have some background knowledge on violent extremism. The goal is to enable learners to articulate positions unlike their own. Begin by selecting volunteers to take on the roles of panellists on a television show to discuss violent extremism from a youth perspective. Ideally, the learners are assigned a position, which is the opposite of their personal views on the topic. The class asks questions to the panellists, while the teacher serves as moderator. The activity begins with the student panellists introducing themselves and articulating their positions.

4. Key messages to deliver

After a discussion on controversial issues, positive messages need to be reinforced and transmitted to reunite the classroom community around a common set of values. This is important to ensure that the classroom climate remains productive and learners feel safe.

4.1 SOLIDARITY

Learners can be encouraged to think critically about, and to question, current situations and the status quo; to come up with new and creative approaches to common/global problems; and to find ways to take non-violent and constructive action to demonstrate their solidarity with others. These actions could include volunteerism, or obtaining more information from reputable institutions, NGOs and civil society organizations that work to help people in difficult circumstances and in need of support.

A concept at the core of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is solidarity, irrespective of differences in age, gender, nationality or ethnicity, and not just solidarity with people within your immediate community but also with those outside of it. It may help learners understand this notion if teachers identify examples from current events that illustrate how the world is interconnected, how concerns or issues affecting one part of the world can also impact another region, and how someone living elsewhere can also be confronting the same challenges or issues as oneself.

4.2 RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity is a common feature of most, if not all, societies around the world. It is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature¹⁶.

Acknowledging the intrinsic value of diversity stems from the recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others.¹⁷ Respect for diversity is thus an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity.

Respect for diversity also helps to understand contrasting points of view and nurtures empathy and compassion.

In our diverse societies, these skills are essential to forge meaningful bonds between people and to identify collective solutions for societal well-being and sustainability.¹⁸

16 Expert meeting – International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002346/234607e.pdf>

17 Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, 1995, http://www.unesco.org/webworld/peace_library/UNESCO/HRIGHTS/124-129.HTM

18 Ibid 16.

4.3 HUMAN RIGHTS

Learning about human rights promotes a culture of non-violence and non-discrimination and fosters feelings of respect and tolerance. An education that encourages a better understanding of human rights also enables critical learning and debate about violent extremism.¹⁹ Some of the notions explained below are complex and may not be relevant for the younger learners.

- ▶ Human rights are fundamental and universal safeguards. They apply to all human beings regardless of nationality, place of residence, gender, origin, religion, language, or any other status. Unlike the rights recognized by a State under domestic law, human rights apply to individuals from all States beyond national borders.
- ▶ Human rights entail both rights and responsibilities. Included in these notions is the idea that every person has the duty to respect the rights of others. For example: respecting each other's right to freedom of opinion, expression and belief.
- ▶ It is important, therefore, for young people to understand that individuals (or groups of individuals) cannot invoke their own rights as justification to violate someone else's rights.
- ▶ Knowing what is and what is not a human right, as determined by various international conventions, enables learners to challenge false claims and understand what is just and what requires protection. For example: there is no right not to be criticized; religions do not have rights, people and religious groups do.

¹⁹ Learning: the Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for Twenty-First Century, 1996, http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/15_62.pdf

- ▶ It is also useful to understand that according to international conventions there are non-derogable rights, meaning human rights that must be applied without exception (such as the right to life and the right to freedom from torture), as well as human rights that may be restricted under exceptional circumstances (such as the right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of movement and the right to privacy). These distinctions are useful to help learners develop a more sophisticated understanding of complex situations. For example: if an extremist group commits a violent attack, the media may be given only restricted access to the site and may be instructed to limit communications immediately after the assault, for security reasons.

4.4 LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

Living in an interconnected and interdependent world does not automatically mean that individuals and societies are equipped to live together in peace.

Living in a peaceful society is a long-term goal, which requires “an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values” as well as the ability “to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way.”²⁰

UNESCO’s approach to “learning to live together” is based on this definition and implies two complementary learning processes:

- ▶ the “discovery of others” which sets out to foster mutual understanding among students, and
- ▶ the “experience of shared purposes” whereby students work together towards common goals.

“Learning to live together” leads to the development of core competencies and skills such as empathy, knowledge of other cultures, cultural sensitivity, understanding of discrimination, acceptance, and communication.

²⁰ Learning to Live Together, UNESCO Bangkok Office, 2014, 20, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002272/227208e.pdf>

4.5 YOUNG PEOPLE'S ENGAGEMENT

Young people can be encouraged to harness their energy and enthusiasm to create, and develop positive ideas and innovative solutions to today's challenges and global concerns. With their knowledge of networking through social media, the sharing of experiences becomes instantaneous and potentially widespread.

Through the active participation in youth organizations and informal groups, young people are able to nurture a sense of hope, identity, camaraderie and belonging, which renews their engagement with the community.

Being involved in the decision-making processes at local or governmental levels, or taking part in volunteering activities also cultivates young people's desire and energy for change.

Schools can teach skills related to advocacy, campaigning, budgeting, organization building, and leadership, in order to facilitate engagement.

Democratic processes of elections tend to be too slow for young people, who prefer immediate action. Fast ways to create change and positively impact one's community need to be identified.

ANNEX

■ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: *What if I do not have the answers to their concerns and questions?*

A: Admit it, but do not quit the discussion abruptly. Use the question as a starting point to continue the debate in the next class. You can also encourage the students to use the contentious issue as a subject for a research project. It is important to acknowledge that you, as a teacher, do not have all the answers and that you also need to study further. Practicing honesty is one of the best ways of teaching honesty. Positioning yourself as a life-long learner can further help build a positive rapport with the students. It is important not to drop the subject and provide students with another opportunity to address the issue more substantially. To that effect, you should check and collect the necessary information after the class and consult colleagues and school authorities concerning the best ways in which to handle the issue. Where necessary, do not hesitate to seek professional development to improve your expertise.

Q: *Should I touch upon sensitive subjects or those considered “taboo”?*

A: With the growing access to information and communication technology, teachers and parents may be surprised by the extent to which children are already exposed to sensitive issues and are aware of controversial world events. Teachers should therefore not refrain from tackling such issues. If they do, the students will venture out to seek answers by themselves, which can lead them to misguided sources of information and approaches. Thus avoidance is not an option. Teachers should build a safe and constructive environment for dialogue within the classroom and make sure students

feel and trust that their questions and concerns are heard and taken into account by teachers and the school. This will lead students to resort to the classroom discussion to address their problems and dilemmas. Building trust is critical in handling taboo-issues and the stepping stone towards avoiding marginalization.

Q: *I have minority group students in my class who can be stigmatised for violent extremism. Is it still appropriate to discuss the issue?*

A: Yes, as long as the discussion is balanced. First, it is of utmost importance that the minority group students present in the classroom are not equated with the perpetrators of violent extremism belonging to the same minority/ethnic group. Highlight individual or personal identities over the group identity, as well as the need to respect every individual in his or her own right. Second, it is useful to discuss the issue of unfair stigmatisation cast sometimes on an entire minority group following the violent extremist acts committed by one or two individuals associated with that group. Students need to understand the injustice they themselves can inadvertently inflict on innocent people through stigmatisation and exclusion. Third, from the beginning of the discussion, the teacher must underline that violent extremism is not confined to any racial, religious, ethnic, gender or political group. Diversifying the examples of violent extremism in terms of the background of the perpetrators is critical.

Q: *Do I teach the topic of violent extremism when the student population is not immediately concerned by the phenomena, as it is seen and presented in the media?*

A: The purpose of teaching about the impact of violent extremism as well as encouraging open discussions about its prevention is not just to mitigate its immediate impact. Violent extremism concerns, first and foremost, the violation of basic universal values, such as human rights, non-violence and non-discrimination. Prevention measures involve, among others, teaching students positive values and helping them build resilient minds to counter extremist narratives and influences to which they can be exposed, even if they seem, for now, not to be affected by the phenomenon.

Global Citizenship Education, one of the pivotal concepts utilised to prevent violent extremism, focuses on students' learning about compassion and responsibility towards individuals that they do not know and may never know. Preparing young minds to respect humanity in its diversity and unicity represents one of the most fundamental objectives of quality education to prevent violent extremism.

Q: *Should I focus my discussions on a particular local type/case/example of violent extremism?*

A: Incorporating local examples of extremism in classroom discussions can help make the subject more relevant to students, but it can also lead to emotionally charged and distressing outcomes. There is also the risk of stigmatising certain student populations. It is therefore important to handle the matter in a balanced manner. One can use examples of violent extremism from textbooks, from other countries or from one's own community. To the extent possible, the teacher should diversify the examples used, preventing in this way students from building a stereotyped understanding of violent extremism in relation to one particular group or population. When handling a local manifestation of violent extremism, the teacher can address it at a conceptual level, referring to the different possible causes and drivers of extremism as well as its impact. This will help students approach the topic with some distance and limit the personal involvement that can hinder open and constructive debates.

Q: *How do I prevent learners with different views from confronting each other during and after the classroom discussion?*

A: It is very important that the process of discussing violent extremism is completed within a structured cycle. There has to be a preparation stage for both the teachers and the students. Ground rules must be laid at the very beginning and the teacher must draw clearly the boundaries of what is permitted and what is not. The students should not be left feeling that their voices were not heard or that in-depth discussion was avoided or

terminated abruptly. Debriefing and concluding discussions are thus as relevant as the preparation.

Feeling and experiencing the debate as a democratic and open process that treats all students equally is as meaningful as the actual content of the discussion. If all students are aware that their views were heard and respected they will be less likely to gang-up afterwards. During the discussion, it may also be an opportune time to remind the students that bullying or violence in schools will not be tolerated under any circumstances. If necessary, the teacher can identify unsettled issues requiring in-depth examination and/or follow-up activities and continue the conversation at another time²¹.

Q: How do I address the problem of extremist propaganda online?

A: It is crucial to address the topic of online propaganda openly during the discussion on violent extremism. While propaganda is hardly a new tool for disseminating extremist and harmful ideas, it has a greater impact now because of its wide accessibility via internet. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to address the issue early, by cultivating critical thinking skills and encouraging students to question the sources of information and the motivation of the people posting extremist materials online. Introducing them to such concepts as “digital citizenship” and highlighting the importance of responsible behaviour not only in reality but also online must form part of the school programme to address violent extremism. Meanwhile, the teacher may also wish to make best use of the constructive on-line educational resources on the prevention of violent extremism which can be used to attract the students’ attention and interest (see References section).

21 Stopping Violence in Schools: A guide for teachers, UNESCO 2009, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001841/184162e.pdf>

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For a broad range of resources and educational materials, we encourage readers to consult the *UNESCO Global Citizenship Education Clearinghouse hosted by APCEU* at <http://gcedclearinghouse.org/>

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