ASSESSING COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Principles, methods, examples

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

ASSESSING COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

PRINCIPLES, METHODS, EXAMPLES

Members of the Assessment Working Group,
Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN)

Martyn Barrett, Natalija Aceska, Nadia Azzouz, Celia Baró, Andreani Baytelman, Silva Cenci, Khrystyna Chushak, Aidan Clifford, Astrit Dautaj, Vladimir Filippov, Irina Fursa, Bernt Gebauer, Nihal Gozuyasli, Virginia Larraz, Nazakat Mehdiyeva, Roxana Mihail, Najat Ouakrim-Soivio, Nanna Paaske, Asta Ranonyte, Louis Scerri, Aida Serjanaj, Dragan Stankovski, Nataša Stanojević, Marian Şuţă and Helena Valečić

Council of Europe

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

The reproduction of extracts (up to 500 words) is authorised, except for commercial purposes as long as the integrity of the text is preserved, the excerpt is not used out of context, does not provide incomplete information or does not otherwise mislead the reader as to the nature, scope or content of the text. The source text must always be acknowledged as follows "© Council of Europe, 2021". All other requests concerning the reproduction/translation of all or part of the document, should be addressed to the Directorate of Communications, Council of Europe (F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex or publishing@coe.int).

Cover: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

Photos: Shutterstock and istock

Layout: Jouve, Paris

Council of Europe Publishing
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
http://book.coe.int

ISBN 978-92-871-8839-7 (PDF only)
© Council of Europe, June 2021

Contents

PREFACE **5**

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION **7**

CHAPTER 2 – AN OVERVIEW OF THE RFCDC **13**

CHAPTER 3 – KEY ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES IN ASSESSING COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE **33**

CHAPTER 4 – METHODS FOR ASSESSING COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE, WITH CONCRETE EXAMPLES **69**

1. Dialogue-based assessment 71
2. Activity-based self-assessment 76
3. Observational assessment 84
4. Oral presentations 89
5. Debate-based assessment 93
6. Role play or simulation assessment 98
7. Dynamic assessment 106
8. Written answers to open-ended questions and essays 111
9. Scenario-based assessment using questioning 119
10. Project-based assessment 125
11. Reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections 131
12. Portfolios and e-portfolios 137

FURTHER READING **149**

APPENDIX **153**

Preface

This book has been produced for use by education practitioners and policy makers, to assist them in making decisions about how to assess learners' competences for democratic culture. The book is intended for use in conjunction with the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC).

The RFCDC, which was published in 2018, offers a comprehensive integrated description of the competences that citizens require for participating effectively in democratic culture and intercultural dialogue. It contains detailed guidance for education policy makers and practitioners on how education (from pre-school through to higher education) can be harnessed to support the development of these competences in learners. Applying the RFCDC through education promotes learners' respect for human rights, cultural diversity and democracy, and fosters their levels of active democratic citizenship and intercultural engagement and understanding.

In order to assist its member states in integrating the RFCDC into their education systems, the Council of Europe launched its Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) in April 2018. EPAN began by mapping and reviewing member states' existing education systems, so that proposals could be made as to how these might be revised to accommodate the implementation of the RFCDC. In order to make this task more manageable, three separate EPAN working groups were established, one on curricula, one on teaching and learning, and one on assessment.

The Assessment Working Group (AWG) began its activities by conducting a survey of the assessment practices that are already used in the member states for assessing learners' competences in the fields of education for democratic citizenship, human rights, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue, broadly construed. The information received in the survey was discussed, analysed and evaluated at meetings of the AWG that took place in June and October 2018. In total, 35 assessment methods were identified, and these were classified as falling into 10 categories.

In the course of these discussions, it became apparent that some of the methods could serve as very useful practical examples of what can be done to assess learners' democratic and intercultural competences in reliable and valid ways. It also became apparent that the AWG could assist the implementation of the RFCDC in the member states by compiling the "best" assessment methods (in the judgment of the members of the AWG) into a compendium. This compendium could then be used as a resource by both education practitioners and policy makers to aid their decisions about how to assess learners' competences within their own educational contexts.

During the second year of its activity, the members of the AWG therefore revised the information that they had submitted so far, and supplied further examples of the assessment methods in use within their own countries that they judged to be particularly suitable and useful for assessing learners' competences. In submitting a method for consideration for inclusion in the compendium, they were asked to rate the method on a number of criteria and to provide reasons for the ratings that were given. All of the examples of assessment methods that were submitted, together with their ratings and reasons for the ratings, were scrutinised by the members of the AWG at an EPAN meeting that took place in April 2019. Written feedback was provided on each example and returned to those who had supplied the examples; the information provided about the example was then clarified, expanded and refined, as necessary.

At the final meeting of the AWG in October 2019, decisions about the structure and contents of the compendium were made by the members of the group. An initial draft of the present book was written between November 2019 and February 2020, on the basis of those decisions. After receiving feedback, the book was finalised in July 2020.

As the lead expert who co-ordinated the activities of the AWG, I would like to express my very sincere thanks to all the members of the group. Everyone contributed to the work of the group enthusiastically and productively, and the meetings always took place in a spirit of collegiality, mutual support and friendship. There are, however, two specific individuals whom I would like to single out for particular mention. They are Aidan Clifford (who very willingly helped to develop the template that was used for collecting the information about the assessment methods, and then supplied three impeccable examples for others in the group to emulate) and Christopher Reynolds (who, as a member of the Council of Europe Secretariat, provided highly professional support throughout all the meetings of the group). Finally, I would also like to thank Mike Byram, Aidan Clifford and Bruno Losito for providing invaluable feedback on the initial draft of the current book prior to its finalisation. Their feedback has enabled this compendium to be fine-tuned and improved in numerous ways.

Martyn Barrett

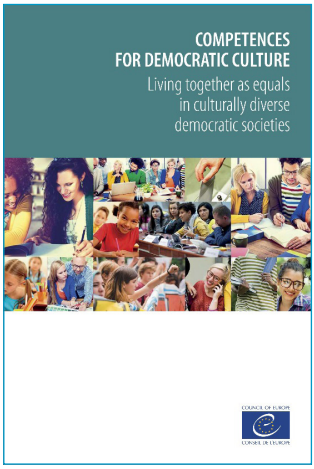
July 2020

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

In 2016, the Council of Europe published a slim book with the title *Competences for democratic culture: living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies*. This book described a conceptual model of the competences that learners need to acquire through the educational process if they are to participate as effective democratic citizens in culturally diverse societies.

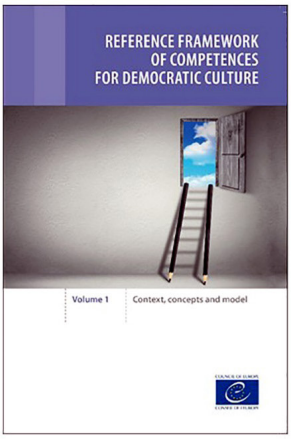


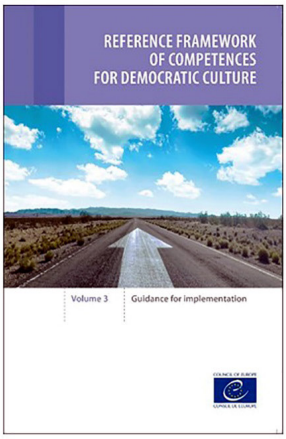
The book was showcased to the ministers of education of the Council of Europe's member states at the 25th Session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, which took place in Brussels in April 2016. The ministers recognised the relevance of the book to the challenges facing Europe today. These challenges include the rise of terrorism and violent extremism, the increased number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe, the rise of populism, an increased sense of political crisis, and the jeopardising of democratic values as a reaction to that sense of crisis. The ministers noted that education has a crucial role to play in responding to these challenges. This is because one of the major purposes of education in the member states is to prepare young people for

life as active citizens in democratic societies and to prepare them for addressing the political challenges facing their societies. This means equipping them with the competences required to defend and promote human rights, democracy and justice, take action in society, and engage in respectful intercultural dialogue with those who are perceived to have other cultural affiliations. The ministers viewed the conceptual model of competences described in the book as an important first step towards developing a comprehensive competence-based framework for citizenship education that may be used to empower young people as democratic citizens in precisely this way. The Final Declaration of the conference, which was unanimously adopted by the ministers, called on the Council of Europe to assist member states in examining and implementing the model in their national education systems.

Over the next two years, the expert group that had produced the 2016 book wrote further accompanying materials. These included descriptors (i.e. statements or descriptions of what a person is able to do if they have achieved a degree of proficiency in the various competences specified by the conceptual model), and guidance for ministries of education and for education practitioners on how the model and the descriptors can be used for a variety of purposes (curriculum development, pedagogical planning, assessment, teacher education, using a whole-school approach for promoting learners' competences, and building learners' resilience to radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism).

All of these materials were finally published in three volumes in April 2018, as the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC). The RFCDC was formally launched at the Council of Europe conference of the Danish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, entitled "Democratic culture – from words to action", which took place in Copenhagen in April 2018.





To support the member states in implementing the RFCDC in their national education systems as the ministers of education had requested, two bodies were set up by the Council of Europe in 2018: the Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) and the Democratic Schools Network (DSN). EPAN conducted a survey of the member states in April 2019 to evaluate the extent to which the RFCDC was being implemented

in practice. The survey revealed that the RFCDC, just one year after publication, was already being introduced, either in whole or in part, into national education systems in 17 countries. In addition, in January 2020, the DSN revealed that implementation was also taking place in individual schools in a further 12 countries. Implementation in these 29 countries is taking place in various ways: sometimes as part of the regular cycle of curriculum review and reform at national, regional or federal level; sometimes at the level of a local education authority; and sometimes at the level of an individual school or teacher who has decided to champion and implement the RFCDC.

In addition, the Council of Europe has produced further accompanying material. Two new guidance documents have been written: one on the role of language in promoting learners' democratic competences, and one on the role of the RFCDC in higher education. A tool to support teachers in reflecting on their own professional practices and competences has also been developed, as has a portfolio for use in the classroom for promoting learners' democratic and intercultural competences – this portfolio will be introduced later on in this book.

The current book is a further resource to accompany the RFCDC. The guidance that it offers on how to assess learners' competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue is intended for use by education practitioners and education policy makers who wish to reflect on how these competences can be most appropriately assessed.

The purpose, structure and contents of this book

This book therefore provides a discussion of assessment principles and assessment methods that may be used for assessing the competences that are specified by the RFCDC. While an initial outline of these principles and methods is already available in Volume 3 of the RFCDC, the guidance that is given there does not, on its own, provide sufficient information to enable education practitioners to assess learners' competences – instead, it only offers pointers to the methods that may be used. By contrast, the current book provides a systematic review of assessment principles, provides more detailed descriptions of the various assessment methods that may be used, and provides concrete examples of assessment methods that are already being used in some of the Council of Europe's member states and beyond. The intention is that, by reading this book and considering the relevant issues that it covers, practitioners will be assisted in selecting assessment methods that are suitable for use in relationship to the RFCDC and will be able to develop and implement their own assessments.

This book has three main chapters. The following chapter, Chapter 2, provides a brief overview of the RFCDC. It explains some of the concepts underlying the RFCDC and the process through which the Framework was developed. It also provides a summary overview of the main contents of the RFCDC. This summary is provided because assessment practices need to be understood within the wider context of the entire educational process; assessment practices need to be appropriate for the competences that are being assessed, they need to be able to capture the learning outcomes that are specified by the curriculum, and they need to be aligned with the teaching and learning methods that are used to support learners in achieving

those outcomes. In other words, assessment is just one component of a much larger holistic educational process, and suitable decisions concerning assessment can only be made in relationship to the other components of that process. Hence the need for the users of this book to understand the overall contents of the RFCDC, because this provides the context within which all decisions about how to assess democratic and intercultural competences will need to be made.

Chapter 3 then introduces the reader to key issues and principles in the assessment of the competences that are specified by the RFCDC. Various conceptual distinctions are introduced and explored in this chapter. These include the distinctions between: assessment and evaluation; high-stakes and low-stakes assessment; assessment for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes; achievement and proficiency assessment; and norm-referenced, cohort-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment. The chapter then moves on to the formal principles of assessment, that is, the need for validity, reliability, equity, transparency and practicality in all assessments that are conducted. A sixth assessment principle, of respectfulness, which was constructed specifically for the RFCDC in order to address the ethical challenges associated with assessing values and attitudes in particular, is also examined. In addition, this chapter discusses the use of descriptors for assessment purposes, and the role that rubrics can play in assessment (further information about rubrics, including some practical guidance on how to construct rubrics for use in relationship to the RFCDC, is provided in the Appendix to the book). It is noted that assessments do not only have to be conducted by teachers and trained assessors – assessments can also be conducted by learners themselves and by peers, and also by those working in the non-formal education sector.[1] The chapter concludes by emphasising that users of the RFCDC will need to make their own decisions concerning the various issues that are raised in this book, in order to ensure that they are adapted to and meet the specific needs of their own national, cultural and educational contexts.

Against this background, Chapter 4 then offers a selection of the methods that can be used to assess learners' competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue. All of the methods that are included in this chapter have been judged to be suitable for assessing competences in a manner that is consistent with the contents of the RFCDC and with the principles of assessment discussed in the preceding chapter. Furthermore, all of the methods are currently being used in one or more countries, and are therefore tried and tested methods that are known to be practicable. In each case, a general characterisation and description of the method is provided. The description includes all of the following information: the age of the learners who can be assessed using the method; who can conduct the assessment

1. Distinctions are often drawn between formal, non-formal and informal education. "Formal education" is the structured education and training system that runs from pre-primary and primary through secondary school and on to university; it takes place, as a rule, at general or vocational educational institutions and leads to certification. "Non-formal education" is any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences outside the formal educational setting; it includes programmes administered by community, youth, sports and cultural organisations. "Informal education" is the lifelong process through which every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience.

using the method; the educational purposes for which the method can be used; and the specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method. In addition, for each method, summary judgments are provided about the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method for assessing the competences specified by the RFCDC.

Before these various assessment methods can be properly understood and appreciated, however, it is essential for the reader to understand the broader context within which assessment decisions need to be made. For this reason, the next chapter provides a brief overview of the RFCDC.

Chapter 2

An overview of the RFCDC

In essence, the RFCDC is a set of materials that can be used to equip learners with the competences that are required to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies. It is intended for use by education practitioners in all sectors of education systems from pre-school through primary and secondary schooling to higher education, including adult education and vocational education; it may also be used by practitioners in non-formal education. The Framework offers a systematic approach to designing the teaching, learning and assessment of competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, and introducing them into education systems in ways that are coherent, comprehensive and transparent.

The RFCDC consists of three main components: a conceptual model of the competences that young people need to acquire in order to be able to participate effectively in democratic culture and intercultural dialogue; validated and scaled descriptors for all of the competences in the conceptual model; and guidance for education practitioners and ministries of education on how the conceptual model and the descriptors can be used to create more effective education systems for promoting the democratic and intercultural competences of young people.

The RFCDC was developed through a process of dialogue with the ministries of education of the Council of Europe's member states, and its contents were also informed by what is known from social-scientific research about the development of young people's democratic and intercultural competences. A description of the process through which the RFCDC was developed is provided in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1

The process through which the RFCDC was developed

Work to develop the RFCDC was initiated by the member state of Andorra. When Andorra held the chairmanship of the Council of Europe in 2012-13, it made education the priority of its political and policy programme. Andorra was particularly concerned to ensure that education would be used to promote learners' competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue. The development of a new integrated reference framework was identified as the optimal route to achieve this goal.

An expert group was established by the Council of Europe's Education Department to develop the Framework. The work of the group was supervised by the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE). There are two representatives from each member state on the committee, typically senior civil servants from the national ministry of education. Throughout the process of developing the RFCDC, the expert group reported to the CDPPE on a regular basis, and on these occasions it also received feedback on its work from CDPPE members.

At the outset, the CDPPE made a number of recommendations to the expert group. For example, it recommended that the expert group should take the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a model for its work. The CEFR identifies a set of competences that are required for effective language use, with proficiency in these competences being specified through descriptors (i.e. concrete statements of what a person "can do" at the different levels of proficiency). Due to the authoritative status of the CEFR, the CDPPE recommended that the expert group should likewise identify a set of competences that are required for acting as a democratic citizen and for engaging in intercultural dialogue, and should specify levels of proficiency in these competences through descriptors. In addition, the CDPPE recommended that the expert group should ensure that the framework covered all age groups and all levels of formal education, and that the group should build on the best existing work that was available in the field rather than "reinvent the wheel".

The expert group therefore began by conducting an audit of existing schemes of democratic and intercultural competence. In total, over 100 such schemes were audited. Using a set of principled criteria, 20 core competences were identified from these schemes, which were then used to build a new comprehensive competence model. This model was submitted to an international consultation with academic experts, education practitioners, and experts nominated by the education ministries of the member states. The competence model was strongly endorsed in this consultation.

Descriptors were then written for all of the competences in the model. These descriptors were screened, validated and scaled to different levels of proficiency, using data collected from over 3 000 teachers working in countries across Europe. Finally, the expert group wrote guidance on how the competence model and the descriptors can be used for the purposes of curriculum development, pedagogical planning, assessment, teacher education, implementing a whole-school approach, and building learners' resilience to radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism.

All stages of this work were overseen by the CDPPE and were informed by feedback provided by the members of the committee. This dialogical working method ensured that the framework that was eventually developed met the needs of the member states' ministries of education.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the RFCDC, in order to enable readers to appreciate the context within which decisions concerning the assessment of democratic and intercultural competences need to be made. We begin by explaining some of the concepts that underlie the Framework.

The concept of democratic culture

It should be noted that the RFCDC contains the term "democratic culture" in its title. Democracy means a form of governance by or on behalf of the people. A principal feature of modern representative democracies is that the government should be responsive to the views of the people who are being governed. For this reason, democracy cannot operate in the absence of institutions that ensure the inclusive enfranchisement of adult citizens, the organisation of regular, contested, free and fair elections, government by those who have received the greatest share of the votes or seats in an election, and the accountability of the government to the people who are being governed.

However, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions, these institutions themselves cannot function unless citizens practise a culture of democracy and hold democratic values and attitudes. Among other things, these include:

- a commitment to public deliberation and discussion;
- a willingness to express one's own opinions and to listen to the opinions of others;
- a conviction that differences of opinion and conflicts must be resolved peacefully;
- a commitment to decisions being made by those who have received the greatest share of the votes or seats in an election;
- a commitment to the protection of minority groups and their rights, including the rights of those who do not support the policies of the elected government;
- a commitment to the rule of law.

Democracy also requires citizens' commitment to participate actively in the democratic process. If citizens do not adhere to these values, attitudes and practices (i.e. if a democratic culture does not prevail), then democratic institutions will not be able to function.

The need for intercultural dialogue in culturally diverse democratic societies

In addition, the RFCDC proposes that, in culturally diverse societies, democratic processes and institutions require intercultural dialogue. A fundamental principle of democracy is that those affected by political decisions should be able to express their views when decisions are being made, and that decision makers should pay attention to their views. Intercultural dialogue is the most important means through which citizens can express their views, concerns and hopes to other citizens who have different cultural affiliations from themselves. Furthermore, it is the means through

which decision makers can understand the perspectives of all citizens, taking into account their varying cultural affiliations. In culturally diverse societies, intercultural dialogue is thus crucial for ensuring that all citizens are equally able to participate in public discussion and decision making.

Intercultural dialogue is also vital in culturally diverse societies to surmount ethnic, religious, national, linguistic and other cultural divides. It enables citizens to live peacefully together and to deal with cultural differences respectfully and constructively on the basis of their common dignity and rights.

For all of these reasons, citizens within culturally diverse democratic societies need to be not only democratically but also interculturally competent. Democracy and intercultural dialogue are complementary in culturally diverse societies.

The concept of competence used in the RFCDC

The RFCDC specifies in detail the nature of the competences that learners need to acquire through the educational process so that they are equipped with democratic values and attitudes, can participate effectively in democratic culture, and can engage in intercultural dialogue.

The RFCDC employs a particular definition of the term "competence". Competence (in the singular) is defined as the ability to activate and use relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, difficulties and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations.

The RFCDC also uses the term "competences" (in the plural) to refer to the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding that are activated and used. Hence, in this second sense of the term, competences are the components of democratic and intercultural competence. In other words, competence consists of the activation and deployment of competences to meet the demands, difficulties and opportunities presented by democratic and intercultural situations and any other social or ethical situations that may arise.

Against the background of these concepts, we can now examine the three main components of the RFCDC.

The first component of the RFCDC: the conceptual model of competences

The conceptual model of competences contains 20 competences that young people need to acquire in order to fulfil the role of an interculturally competent democratic citizen. These competences are shown in Figure 2.1. As can be seen, the 20 competences fall into four broad categories: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. Box 2.2 provides a simple description of each one of these 20 competences.

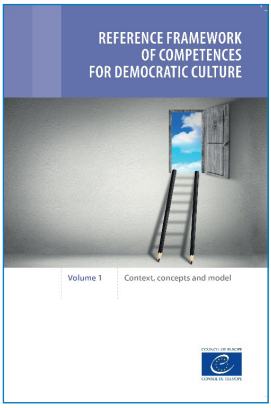
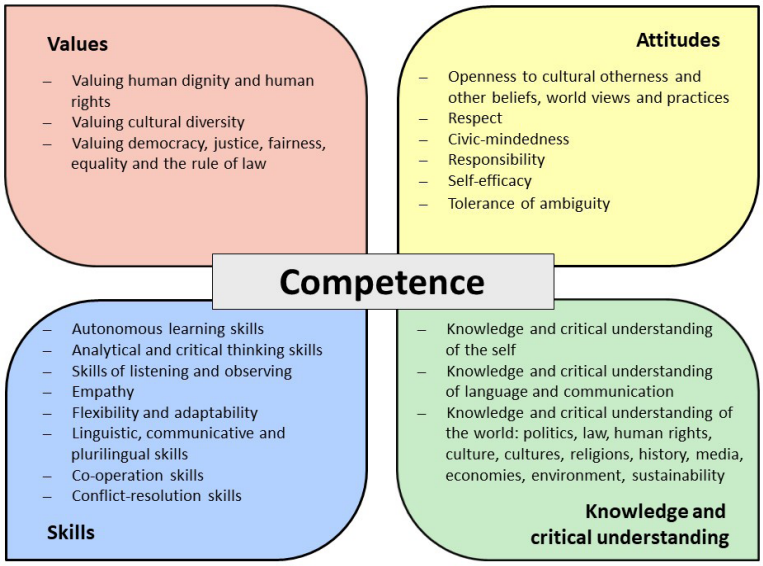


Figure 2.1: The RFCDC "butterfly" model of competences for democratic culture



Box 2.2

A summary list and description of the 20 competences in the RFCDC

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) 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.

It is clear from the descriptions of these competences that some of them (e.g. openness and empathy) can be taught and learnt from a relatively early age at pre-school and primary school, whereas others are more suitable for teaching in upper secondary school or even in higher education (e.g. knowledge and critical understanding of politics and law). As such, promoting the development of these competences is a task that applies across all levels of formal education, from pre-school through primary and secondary education to higher education.

The RFCDC proposes that, in real-life situations, these various competences are rarely activated and used individually. Instead, they are much more likely to be applied in clusters. Depending on the situation and the specific demands, challenges and opportunities that the situation presents, as well as the specific needs of the individual within the situation, different subsets of competences will be activated and used.

Furthermore, any given situation also changes over time. For this reason, an effective response requires constant monitoring of the situation and appropriate ongoing adjustment of the competences being used. In other words, a competent individual will activate and apply clusters of competences in a dynamic and adaptive manner in order to meet the constantly shifting demands, challenges and opportunities that arise within democratic and intercultural situations. Three illustrations of how clusters of competences might be used in practice are given in Box 2.3.

Box 2.3

Illustrations of how clusters of competences might be used in practice

Illustration 1 – Interacting during an intercultural encounter

At a multicultural event, two people who have different cultural backgrounds from each other find themselves standing together. They start to talk about their respective ethnic and religious practices. Their conversation initially requires them to adopt an attitude of openness towards each other. Once the dialogue commences, they also need to activate and use close listening skills and linguistic and communicative skills to ensure that miscommunications do not occur and that the contents of the conversation remain sensitive to the communicative needs and cultural norms of the other person. Empathy is also likely to be required, along with analytical thinking skills, to facilitate comprehension of the other person's point of view, especially if this is not immediately apparent from what they are saying. It may emerge during the course of the conversation that there are irreconcilable differences in points of view between them. If this is the case, then respect for difference and tolerance of ambiguity need to be deployed and the lack of a clear-cut resolution accepted. They might realise that there were some things said by the other person that they did not understand properly, in which case they may subsequently use their autonomous learning skills to seek out further information from other sources in order to clarify their understanding.

Illustration 2 – Taking a stand against hate speech

A citizen may choose to take a principled stand against hate speech that is being directed at women on the internet. Such a stand is likely to be initiated through the activation of human dignity as a fundamental value and be sustained through the activation of an attitude of civic-mindedness and a sense of responsibility. To challenge the contents of the hate speech, analytical and critical thinking skills need to be applied. In addition, the formulation of an appropriate response requires knowledge of human rights as well as linguistic and communicative skills in order to ensure that the stand that is taken is expressed appropriately and is targeted effectively at its intended audience(s). In addition, knowledge and understanding of digital media need to be drawn upon to ensure that the response is posted in an appropriate manner and its impact maximised.

Illustration 3 – Participating in political debate and supporting one's own political position

In order to function effectively in political debate and to argue in support of one's own political position, it is necessary to have good knowledge and understanding of the political issues that are being debated. Then, to engage in debate, it is also necessary to use listening skills, analytical and critical thinking skills and empathy in order to understand the position for which one's opponent is arguing. In responding to that position, linguistic and communicative skills need to be activated and deployed. In addition, depending upon how the debate proceeds, one may have to adapt and adjust one's arguments accordingly. If there are irreconcilable differences in points of view, then respect for difference and tolerance of ambiguity will also need to be deployed at the end of the debate.

This notion – that competences often need to be used in clusters in a dynamic manner in order to meet the needs of situations that are constantly changing – has important implications for assessing the proficiency of learners in using their competences. We shall return to these implications for the assessment of proficiency in the following chapter.

In summary, the RFCDC proposes that formal education should seek to develop all 20 competences in young people in order to foster their democratic and intercultural competence. Formal education should also provide plentiful opportunities for young people to practise and consolidate their ability to activate and apply clusters of these competences in a fluid and adaptive manner.

While Box 2.2 provides a list and simple description of the 20 competences in the RFCDC, much more detailed descriptions of each individual competence are provided by the RFCDC. Users of the Framework are encouraged to read the full descriptions that are available in the first volume of the RFCDC in order to obtain a proper understanding of the scope of each competence.

The second component of the RFCDC: the scaled descriptors

In order to assist education systems to achieve the goal of equipping learners with these 20 competences, the RFCDC also provides validated and scaled descriptors for all of the competences. These descriptors are clear, explicit and concise statements or descriptions of the observable behaviours that a person will display if they have achieved a certain level of proficiency in a given competence.

The descriptors have been scaled to three levels of proficiency – basic, intermediate and advanced. Because of the statistical scaling procedure that was used, the descriptors are cumulative across all levels. In other words, if a learner displays a behaviour at an advanced level of proficiency for a particular competence, then

it is highly likely that he or she will also display the behaviour at both the intermediate and basic level for that same competence. However, if a learner displays a behaviour at an intermediate level of proficiency, then it is highly likely that he or she will display the behaviour at the basic level, but may not necessarily display the behaviour at the advanced level.

In total, the RFCDC contains 447 descriptors. Out of these 447 descriptors, a subset of 135 have been identified as being particularly useful for representing the three levels of proficiency for each competence. These are called "key descriptors". Box 2.4 provides examples of the scaled key descriptors for two of the 20 competences. Users of the RFCDC are encouraged to consult the full bank of descriptors provided by the RFCDC, in order to obtain a full understanding of the descriptors for all 20 competences.

Box 2.4

The scaled key descriptors for civic-mindedness and for skills of listening and observing

Civic-mindedness

- **Basic level of proficiency**
  - Expresses a willingness to co-operate and work with others
  - Collaborates with other people for common interest causes
- **Intermediate level of proficiency**
  - Expresses commitment to not being a bystander when the dignity and rights of others are violated
  - Discusses what can be done to help make the community a better place
- **Advanced level of proficiency**
  - Exercises the obligations and responsibilities of active citizenship at either the local, national or global level
  - Takes action to stay informed about civic issues

Skills of listening and observing

- **Basic level of proficiency**
  - Listens carefully to differing opinions
  - Listens attentively to other people
- **Intermediate level of proficiency**
  - Watches speakers' gestures and general body language to help himself/herself to figure out the meaning of what they are saying
  - Can listen effectively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions
- **Advanced level of proficiency**
  - Pays attention to what other people imply but do not say
  - Notices how people with other cultural affiliations react in different ways to the same situation

An important point about the descriptors is that they provide an operationalisation of the 20 competences in terms of the concrete observable behaviours that may be displayed by learners at different levels of achievement or proficiency. It should also be noted that the descriptors are formulated using the language of learning outcomes: each descriptor contains an action verb together with the object of that verb, and the behaviour that is described is both observable and assessable.

Because the descriptors are expressed using the language of learning outcomes, they can be used to develop a curriculum that specifies not only the competences that should be taught at particular educational levels but also the specific learning outcomes that should be achieved at each stage in the curriculum. In addition, the descriptors can be used as an aid for designing learning activities for enhancing young people's competences, because they provide clear and explicit descriptions of the particular behaviours that need to be achieved as the learning outcomes of those activities.

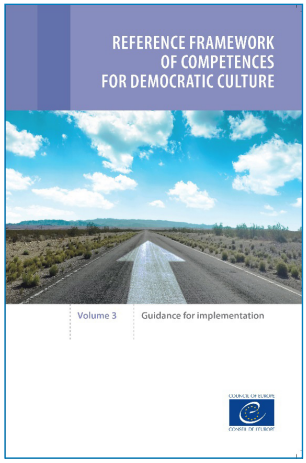
Finally, the descriptors can also be used to support the assessment of learners' level of proficiency, either to identify areas for further development (i.e. using assessment for a formative purpose), or to assess the level of achievement or proficiency after a period of learning (i.e. using assessment for a summative purpose). However, it is important to note that, in assessment, the descriptors should not simply be used as a checklist against which to assess a learner's behaviour, with a cumulative or total score being assigned to a learner according to the number of behaviours, or levels of behaviours, that he or she has produced. Because of the dynamic and context-dependent way in which clusters of competences are used and applied within specific situations, assessment is necessarily a more complex process than simply checking behaviours off on a list. The following chapter will provide an explanation of how the descriptors can and should be used for assessment purposes.

It is recommended that anyone who is considering using the descriptors in either policy or practice should first read the more detailed information and guidance that is provided in the second volume of the RFCDC.

The third component of the RFCDC: the guidance for ministries of education and education practitioners

The third component of the RFCDC consists of guidance for ministries of education and education practitioners on how the conceptual model and the descriptors can be used by education systems for promoting the democratic and intercultural competences of learners. There are eight areas of application that are covered in this guidance:

- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Assessment
- Teacher education
- Using a whole-school approach



- The role of language in fostering competences for democratic culture
- Higher education
- Building learners' resilience to radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism

The following sections provide brief summaries of the guidance that is given under each of these areas.

Curriculum

The guidance on curriculum describes the different ways in which curricula may be organised, which can be through individual subjects or disciplines, broader areas of study, or cross-curricular topics and competences. The RFCDC can, in principle, be applied using all of these approaches. However, a significant focus of the guidance is on the use of a cross-curricular approach, in which the responsibility for fostering democratic and intercultural competences is distributed and incorporated across the entire school curriculum. It is important to note that the competences that are specified by the RFCDC can be taught through every school subject. For example, even subjects such as mathematics and the natural sciences can make a contribution if they employ co-operative group work which requires learners to practise their skills of listening and observing, empathy, respect, linguistic and communicative skills, co-operation skills and conflict-resolution skills. For this reason, the RFCDC proposes that a cross-curricular approach is an ideal approach to use for promoting the development of the 20 competences in learners.

The basic principles of curriculum design are also reviewed. These include the relevance of the curriculum to learners, avoiding curriculum overload, the need for coherence and transparency between the contents and aims of the curriculum, the need for horizontal and vertical coherence within the curriculum (i.e. across the contents of the curriculum and across years of study), the need to ensure progression and expansion of competences over time, and the use of consultation and dialogue with stakeholders (especially parents, learners and teachers) in the process of developing the curriculum.

In addition, the curriculum guidance notes that the RFCDC (both the model of competences and the descriptors) can be used for auditing and reviewing the prescribed curriculum in order to discover where democratic and intercultural competences are already being promoted, and to identify where else in the curriculum the 20 competences could also be promoted. It also discusses the need to ensure that all 20 competences are being fostered in learners. Finally, the guidance explores the use of the RFCDC to design and develop an institutional curriculum, and a subject or interdisciplinary curriculum.

Pedagogy

The guidance on pedagogy begins by discussing the principles of pedagogical planning. These principles concern the need for teaching methods to provide opportunities for learners to engage in experience, comparison, analysis, reflection and action in order for their competences to be promoted effectively.

The guidance then reviews the teaching and learning methods that are most suitable for fostering the development of democratic and intercultural competences in learners. These methods include:

- teachers modelling democratic attitudes and behaviours through the way in which they interact and communicate with learners;
- implementing democratic processes in the classroom by involving learners in making decisions about activities, responsibilities and rules;
- using activities that are based on co-operative learning principles (such as positive interdependence between learners, individual accountability and non-discriminatory participation);
- using project-based learning, in which learners participate in choosing the topic of study, planning the work, collecting and organising information, preparing a product (such as a poster, video, publication, performance), making a presentation of the product, and reflecting on the learning experience;
- using service learning, in which learners apply their competences to a real-world issue and participate in service activities that benefit the community beyond the school, and then subsequently reflect on their service activity in order to develop their learning further.

The guidance on pedagogy also discusses the ways in which the existing curriculum within specific subject areas can employ activities that foster the development of democratic and intercultural competences; the role of team teaching (e.g. to plan project-based activities, and to cover transversal topics that are relevant to developing the competences); and the importance of addressing the "hidden curriculum" and its implicit messages. The guidance concludes with some concrete examples of pedagogical practices and activities that can be used to promote the development of the 20 competences.

Assessment

The guidance on assessment begins by discussing the basic principles of assessment. These include the need for validity, reliability, equity, transparency and practicality in all educational assessments that are conducted. It also considers the need for assessment procedures to be respectful of the dignity and rights of the learners who are being assessed – thus, assessment methods should not violate the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, and freedom from discrimination. Various conceptual distinctions are also examined, including high-stakes and low-stakes assessment, achievement and proficiency assessment, norm-referenced, cohort-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment, and formative and summative assessment.

The guidance then reviews the methods that are suitable for assessing the development of democratic and intercultural competences in learners. These include:

- open-ended diaries, reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections, in which learners record and reflect on their own behaviour, learning, competences and personal development;
- observational assessment, in which the teacher or other assessor observes learners' behaviours in a range of different situations to ascertain the extent to which they are deploying competences appropriately and effectively;

- dynamic assessment, in which the teacher or other assessor actively supports the learner during the assessment process to enable the learner to reveal his or her maximum level of proficiency in the use of competences;
- project-based assessment, which forms an integral part of project-based learning, where the process, the product, the presentation and the learners' reflections are all used to assess the learners' competences;
- portfolio assessment, in which the learner compiles a systematic, cumulative and ongoing collection of materials as evidence of his or her own proficiency in the use of competences, and reflects critically on his or her learning, progress, efforts, performance and proficiency.

The guidance also discusses the various methods that can be used to maximise validity and reliability in assessment, and notes that assessments can be carried out by a range of actors, including teachers, trained assessors, peers and the learner him- or herself. The guidance concludes by providing some concrete examples of how the dynamic use of clusters of competences by learners may be assessed.

The topic of assessment will be discussed in much greater detail in the next two chapters of this book: Chapter 3 will focus on the conceptual distinctions and the assessment principles, while Chapter 4 will review the full range of methods that can be used to assess learners' competences, accompanied by concrete examples of how each individual method may be used in practice.

Teacher education

Implementing the RFCDC requires changing many aspects of school life, and teacher education needs to prepare teachers adequately for managing these changes. The guidance on teacher education discusses the role of both pre-service and in-service teacher education in promoting and implementing education based on the RFCDC. The guidance suggests that, because education based on the RFCDC is most effective when delivered using a cross-curricular approach, the responsibility for delivering it should not be assigned solely to subject-specific specialists such as teachers of civic education or social studies, but should be shared by all teachers, irrespective of the specific school subject that they teach. For this reason, teacher education needs to ensure that all teachers understand the principles of the RFCDC and are proficient in applying them in the course of their everyday planning and practice.

The guidance on teacher education also emphasises that, in order to be able to educate children and young people in ways that foster the development of the competences, it is important that teachers themselves have reflected upon and cultivated their own democratic and intercultural competences. This also applies to teacher educators. Teacher education therefore has a responsibility to ensure that all future and practising teachers are provided with ample opportunities and support for reflecting on, developing and self-assessing their own personal competences.

The guidance additionally discusses the use of the RFCDC for professional development, for the review and revision of existing teacher education courses and study programmes, and for educational research and teachers' own action research. The

guidance concludes by providing some concrete examples of good practice in teacher education from different European countries.

Using a whole-school approach

The guidance on the whole-school approach explains in detail what this approach is and how to implement it. A whole-school approach involves using democratically and interculturally appropriate and respectful structures and procedures in all aspects of school life, including:

- curriculum development;
- the teaching and learning methods and resources used;
- the assessment methods used;
- school leadership;
- governance and decision making;
- staff–staff, staff–learner and learner–learner relationships;
- extracurricular activities;
- links with the community.

In addition, the guidance discusses the added value that arises in relationship to the RFCDC when a whole-school approach is used. It then makes recommendations on how a whole-school approach may be introduced and applied to a school. Key principles for introducing this approach include respecting the local context and local ways of working, empowering all stakeholders to participate in the process of change, integrating changes into the school's formal planning process, and supporting the initiative over the long term. Implementation needs to take place in five stages:

- conducting an analysis of the current situation within the school;
- identifying potential areas of change, and developing an action plan to achieve these changes;
- implementing the action plan, involving the entire school community in the process;
- evaluating progress and assessing the impact of the changes;
- sharing the lessons learned with all stakeholders that have been involved in the process, and then planning further changes accordingly through a further situational analysis and action plan.

Thus, implementation of a whole-school approach should be cyclical, and each cycle needs to be relatively modest in scale, so that relevant changes are introduced gradually, enabling stakeholders to have sufficient time to adjust and adapt to the changes as they are being made.

The role of language in fostering competences for democratic culture

Because of the central importance of language to success in all subjects of study, educational achievement depends to a large degree on developing competence in language. Education systems must therefore ensure that learners have a sufficient

command of the language of learning/schooling. However, a recurring problem is that the teaching of language tends to be seen as a subject on its own, and not as a core need that affects performance across all subjects. Even when language is acknowledged as a factor in the learning of all school subjects, it is often treated in a narrow way, focusing primarily on vocabulary, grammar, spelling and punctuation. However, teachers need to go beyond this and recognise how language is used in the classroom and the role that language plays in fostering values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding.

The guidance on language examines a number of important questions related to practice. For example, teachers need to ensure that the language they use is demanding but accessible. They need to be sufficiently aware of the language difficulties that individuals experience in the learning process. They also need to provide enough language support when setting tasks that aim to promote learners' competences. Teaching methods which include, for example, group work or project work require linguistic and communicative skills and skills of listening and observing (as well as empathy, co-operation skills and conflict-resolution skills).

Education for values, attitudes and critical understanding, in particular, require a high level of language competence, as shown by the descriptors for these competences. For example, the descriptors for the value "Valuing human dignity and human rights" include words such as "defends", "argues" and "expresses" ("Defends the view that no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", "Argues that all public institutions should respect, protect and implement human rights" and "Expresses the view that all laws should be consistent with international human rights norms and standards"). All these descriptors presuppose that the learner is equipped with a high level of language competence. It is therefore important for teachers to be aware of the language competence of their learners and the extent to which this might be impacting on their democratic and intercultural competences.

Higher education

The guidance on higher education explores how the RFCDC may be used in higher education in all academic disciplines and within all study programmes, irrespective of whether these are academically or professionally oriented. It proposes that a whole-institution approach should be adopted towards the implementation of the RFCDC in higher education, because the Framework relates not just to courses and study programmes but to all aspects of life within a higher education institution. For this reason, the competences should be promoted not only in students but also in academic staff and technical and administrative staff. The role of leadership and governance in higher education institutions is considered to be critical here, as well as the role of other actors such as student unions and associations. The civic role of higher education institutions within their local and regional communities, through which members of the academic community engage as citizens of broader society, is also examined.

The guidance further notes that the RFCDC is highly pertinent to teacher education, which is commonly carried out by higher education institutions through their provision

of both pre-service and in-service education courses for primary and secondary school teachers. The RFCDC can also be applied in the pedagogical preparation and training of the academic staff who teach within higher education institutions.

Finally, the guidance points out that the principles of the RFCDC can be used to guide the approach to research that is adopted by higher education institutions. The RFCDC provides a set of standards that can be used to steer the way in which research is carried out, the process through which research priorities are established, the way in which the findings or outcomes of research are reported, and the way in which new researchers are trained.

Building learners' resilience to radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism

The guidance on radicalisation explains why the RFCDC can be used for building learners' resilience to radicalisation. The RFCDC contributes to this goal because it equips learners not only with the competences needed for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, but also with the competences needed for recognising and dealing with extremist and terrorist propaganda (e.g. analytical and critical thinking skills), for recognising disinformation, fake news and hate speech in broadcast, print and online news media (e.g. knowledge and critical understanding of media), and for valuing human dignity, human rights and democratic processes.

The guidance examines the nature of radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism. It also describes the predisposing conditions that can lead to radicalisation (e.g. difficulties with personal identity, simplistic thinking style, grievances and injustices, disillusionment with politicians and conventional politics) and the enabling conditions that can help to facilitate the transition into violent extremism and terrorism (e.g. exposure to violent extremist ideology, finding a sense of community, identity and belonging among the members of an extremist organisation). The guidance emphasises that different subsets of conditions operate in the case of different individuals. No single condition by itself is likely to lead to radicalisation, and even if a large subset of conditions applies, this will still not necessarily lead an individual into violent extremism and terrorism, especially if that individual is equipped with the competences that confer resilience to violent extremist and terrorist propaganda and rhetoric.

The guidance then explains what is known from research about how resilience to radicalisation can be built. All of the actions that have been identified by research involve fostering one or more of the specific competences that are included within the RFCDC. In other words, education based on the RFCDC provides a systematic, comprehensive and powerful method for building learners' resilience to radicalisation.

The guidance concludes by re-emphasising the importance of using a whole-school approach to foster the development of the 20 competences. Research has demonstrated that the use of this approach, with the valuing of human dignity, human rights, cultural diversity and democratic processes placed at its core, enables learners to become knowledgeable, thoughtful, responsible, engaged and empowered democratic citizens who are highly resilient to radicalisation.

The approach adopted in the guidance on the use of the RFCDC

Because the RFCDC is intended as a tool to help education policy makers and practitioners to rethink their existing activities in the fields of citizenship and human rights education, the guidance that is offered on each of these topics is open-ended. Essentially, the guidance identifies the various options that may be used to implement the RFCDC and outlines the pros and cons of each option. The user is then invited to consider the relevant issues and to make their own decisions in the light of those considerations. All decision making is very deliberately left to local policy makers and practitioners, who have the detailed understanding of the educational, cultural and national contexts in which they are operating – they are therefore the relevant individuals who will need to make decisions concerning implementation that are suitable for and tailored to their own education systems and contexts.

It is recommended that anyone who is considering implementing the RFCDC should read all the guidance documents before beginning the process of implementation.

Conclusion

The RFCDC provides education policy makers and practitioners with a comprehensive and coherent set of materials that can be used to promote the democratic and intercultural competences of learners. Implementing the RFCDC in order to equip learners with these competences is a vital step that member states can take if they wish to ensure that the next generation of adults are effective democratic citizens who are respectful of the cultural affiliations, dignity and rights of others.

It should be noted that the RFCDC shares many features with other competence frameworks that have been put forward recently by OECD and UNESCO, and is also directly relevant to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (see Box 2.5). The principal difference between the RFCDC and the OECD and UNESCO frameworks is that the RFCDC focuses to a greater extent on democratic competence whereas the OECD and UNESCO frameworks focus more on global competence and sustainability. Nevertheless, the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding that are specified by each framework as the competences that need to be promoted by education systems are very similar across all of these frameworks.

Box 2.5

Other international competence frameworks

The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has developed a Global Competence (GC) framework, in which GC is conceptualised as consisting of four dimensions. These are the capacities to: examine local, global and intercultural issues; understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of other people; engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures; and take action for collective well-being and sustainable development. The building blocks of all four dimensions are values, attitudes, skills and knowledge. The specifications of these building blocks in the GC framework are derived directly from the specifications of these competences in the RFCDC.

Likewise, UNESCO's frameworks for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) propose that learners need to be equipped through the educational process with knowledge and understanding of local, global, environmental and sustainability issues; skills for critical thinking, analysis and enquiry; a sense of belonging to a common humanity based on human rights; attitudes of solidarity and respect for differences and diversity; and the motivation, willingness and ability to act effectively and responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world. The overall goals of ESD and GCED are to empower learners as global citizens who are able to adopt active roles, both locally and globally, to address and resolve global challenges, and to become pro-active contributors to creating a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world. The knowledge, skills, attitudes and values specified by the ESD and GCED frameworks overlap considerably with those specified by the RFCDC.

The RFCDC is also directly relevant to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These SDGs apply to all countries, which are expected to establish national frameworks for the achievement of these goals by 2030. SDG 4, on Quality Education, stipulates that all countries should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. Moreover, the specific target of SDG 4.7 specifies that all learners should "acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development". Because the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding that are specified by the RFCDC are directly relevant to all of these outcomes, introducing the RFCDC into a country's national education system makes a direct contribution to that country's ability to achieve target 4.7.

For further reading on these other international frameworks, see:

OECD (2018), *Preparing our youth for an inclusive and sustainable world: The OECD PISA global competence framework*, Paris: www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf.

UNESCO (2017), *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: learning objectives*, Paris: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444.locale=en.

UNESCO (2019), *Educational content up close: examining the learning dimensions of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education*: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372327.

United Nations (2015), *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015: www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.

United Nations (2020), *17 goals to transform our world*: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/.

In the following chapter, we focus much more specifically on assessment issues. As we shall see, there are several important considerations that need to be taken into account in selecting an appropriate method for assessing learners' democratic and intercultural competences as part of the overall educational process.

Chapter 3

Key issues and principles in assessing competences for democratic culture

In the previous chapter, we surveyed the RFCDC as a whole, in order to provide an overview of the broader context within which assessment decisions need to be made. In this chapter, we begin to discuss assessment itself in greater detail. The contents of this chapter build upon and expand some of the material that is contained in the RFCDC guidance document on assessment.

We will start by examining some fundamental issues concerning assessment, before reviewing the set of principles that should underpin all educational assessments. Throughout the chapter, key ideas are extracted and placed in boxes in order to aid the reader's navigation of the text.

The importance of assessment

We begin by noting the importance of assessing learners' competences for democratic culture. There are four main reasons why assessment is a vital component of the educational process.

First, assessment needs to be used to obtain information about the learning process and about the progress that individual learners are making in the development of their

competences, so that teachers can make appropriate decisions about how best to facilitate learners' ongoing development. Assessment can be used to identify learning outcomes that have not yet been achieved, obstacles or difficulties that a learner may be encountering, and strategies or activities that may help them to overcome these difficulties. Assessment provides vital feedback to the teacher which can be used to ensure that teaching and learning processes and activities are optimally tailored to the learning needs of individual learners, enabling them to enhance their learning and performance still further. In other words, assessment is crucial for effective pedagogy.

Second (and related to the preceding point), learners themselves can also be taught to understand the purposes, techniques and processes of assessment. This helps them to view assessment not as a hurdle but as a source of insight into their own learning process and achievements, which can help to foster their autonomy in learning. Such autonomy may result from learners engaging in, and reflecting on, either self-assessment or peer assessment, both of which can assist learners in acquiring an understanding of the assessment criteria, the relevant learning outcomes and the level of performance that is expected. That said, the importance of feedback from teacher assessment (as outlined in the preceding point), when the teacher has been trained in conducting reliable and valid assessments, should not be underestimated.

Third, assessment is also beneficial because it influences the behaviours of learners and teachers through the so-called "washback effect", in which both learners and teachers pay more attention to areas of the curriculum that they know are going to be assessed. This effect occurs because learners tend to attribute greater importance to areas of learning that they know are going to be assessed, and also because teachers strive to ensure that their learners are suitably prepared for assessments that are going to be made. If competences for democratic culture are not assessed, it is likely that they will be neglected by both learners and teachers, and more attention will instead be devoted to other areas of the curriculum that are assessed.

Fourth, learners' parents or caregivers are important stakeholders in the education system, and they have a significant impact on their children's learning and development. This impact occurs through their encouragement of their children's educational endeavours, their provision of educational experiences, activities and resources for their children outside the school, and their interest and involvement in the educational experiences that their children receive at school. As such, it is important for schools to provide parents and caregivers with information about their children's education and progress. In order to provide this information, their children's progress needs to be assessed.

In short, it is important to assess learners' competences for democratic culture if the RFCDC is to be successfully implemented within an education system.

Key idea 1

Learners' progress in developing proficiency in the use of competences for democratic culture needs to be assessed in order to identify how their further progress can best be facilitated, to encourage their autonomy in learning, to ensure that both learners and teachers pay sufficient attention to the development of the competences, and to enable parents or caregivers to be informed about their children's education and progress.

The relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

In an education system, there should always be coherence between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The curriculum specifies the content, breadth and depth of what needs to be taught and learned, the learning outcomes that should be achieved by learners, and the sequences that should be followed in teaching and learning. Pedagogy concerns the methods of teaching and the learning activities that enable learners to master what has been specified by the curriculum, and assessment focuses on judgments about the extent to which learners are achieving or have achieved the learning outcomes specified by the curriculum. Misalignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment sometimes arises either because different actors are responsible for making decisions about the three components of the system (e.g. the education ministry may make decisions about curriculum, teachers or schools about pedagogy, and examination boards about assessment), or because decisions are made about one of the three components without paying sufficient attention to the other two components.

It is important to ensure that the three components are closely aligned with one another. This is because, without such alignment, the educational process will be jeopardised. For example, if pedagogies are not aligned with the curriculum, they will not enable learners to achieve the required learning outcomes in an optimal manner; if assessment is not aligned with pedagogies, the results of the assessment are likely to be misleading; and if assessment is not aligned with the curriculum, then it will be unclear whether the learning outcomes specified by the curriculum have been achieved. To ensure alignment, pedagogies need to be chosen on the basis that they are the optimal methods for enabling learners to achieve the learning outcomes specified by the curriculum, and assessment methods need to be chosen on the basis that they are able to assess the learning outcomes specified by the curriculum and achieved through the pedagogies that have been employed.

Through the competence model and the descriptors, the RFCDC provides a robust foundation for ensuring alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The competences and the descriptors can be used not only to guide the design of the curriculum and to identify the most suitable pedagogical methods for supporting learners to develop the competences, but also to aid decision making concerning the most appropriate methods for assessing learners' proficiency and/or achievement in the use of the competences. In other words, the RFCDC provides a unified and coherent core around which the necessary alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment can be built.

Key idea 2

Assessment methods should be chosen on the basis that they are able to assess the learning outcomes that are specified by the curriculum and can be achieved through the pedagogies that have been used.

Key idea 3

The RFCDC may be used to ensure alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, with the competences and the descriptors being used to guide the design of the curriculum, to identify the most suitable pedagogical methods for supporting learners to develop the competences, and to aid the choice of a method to assess learners' proficiency in the use of the competences.

Assessment and evaluation

In the RFCDC, a distinction is drawn between assessment and evaluation. Assessment is defined as the systematic description and/or measurement of a learner's level of proficiency or achievement, the interpretation of the resulting description or measure, and the expression of a judgment concerning the learner's competences. By contrast, evaluation is defined as the systematic description and/or measurement of the efficacy and effectiveness of an education system, institution or programme (which might consist of a course of study lasting several years, a series of lessons over several days, or even just a single lesson or learning activity). Evaluation also involves the interpretation of the resulting description or measure, and the expression of a judgment concerning that system, institution or programme.

Assessment is often confused with evaluation. This confusion is due, in part, to the fact that assessment and evaluation are related, because the results of assessments can be used for the purposes of system, institutional or programme evaluation. The confusion may also be compounded by the fact that, in some languages, the same word is used for both assessment and evaluation (e.g. the French word *évaluation*). It is important to note that the present book focuses solely upon assessment, not evaluation.

That said, the importance of evaluation should not be overlooked. Gathering evidence about the efficacy and effectiveness of education systems, institutions and programmes is vital if we wish to make well-informed decisions about how best to structure, operate and administer them. However, while the results of learner assessments can be used as part of an evaluation, there are other additional considerations that need to be factored into evaluations (e.g. institutional characteristics, the availability of learning resources, learner characteristics) which fall beyond the scope of the present book.

Key idea 4

Assessment is defined by the RFCDC as the systematic description and/or measurement of an individual learner's level of proficiency or achievement, the interpretation of the resulting description or measure, and the expression of a judgment concerning the learner's competences.

The purposes of assessment

Assessment can serve a wide variety of purposes. The following is a non-exhaustive list of these purposes, each of which may stand alone or be combined with others.

- To identify learners' present progress and future learning goals, and to understand the learning processes in which they have engaged, so that subsequent

teaching and learning activities can be optimally tailored to enable learners to achieve their future goals.

- To identify specific learning obstacles or difficulties that learners might be experiencing, so that subsequent teaching can be tailored to aid learners in overcoming them.
- To monitor whether learners are making expected or sufficient progress in their mastery of the intended learning goals.
- To obtain a description and understanding of the extent to which learners have achieved the intended learning goals at the end of a period of learning.
- To obtain information about the likely performance of learners in another assessment that is to be carried out at a later point in time.
- To award grades to learners.
- To place learners into teaching groups, streams or tiers.
- To choose schools for learners to attend in the future.
- To certify learners' achievement or proficiency.
- To guide decisions about the future employment of learners.

This list includes just 10 of the many different purposes for which assessments of one kind or another are commonly used. It should be noted that the outcome of a single assessment can sometimes be used to serve more than a single purpose, depending on the method that has been used.

Some of these purposes, particularly those in the second half of the list (e.g. to place learners into teaching groups, streams or tiers, and to choose schools for learners to attend in the future) are highly controversial, irrespective of the specific school subject that is being assessed, not least because they can lead to serious problems for equality and inclusion. Furthermore, it could be argued that the overriding purpose of conducting assessments in relationship to the RFCDC, which is concerned above all else with empowering young citizens, is to give the individual learner a sense of his or her own democratic and intercultural capacities and to identify how those capacities can be strengthened further. This argument can be viewed as implying that assessment in relationship to the RFCDC should never be concerned with awarding grades or certifying learners, both of which can result in the disempowerment or exclusion of a significant proportion of learners.

Irrespective of the stance that is taken on these issues, the first four purposes in the list, namely using assessment for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes, are especially useful and appropriate for promoting learners' competences for democratic culture. For this reason, the current book focuses on these four purposes.

Key idea 5

Assessment can be used for a wide variety of purposes, four of which are especially useful and appropriate for promoting learners' competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue – using assessment for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes.

Low-stakes and high-stakes assessment

Low-stakes assessments are assessments that do not have a significant impact on learners' future educational or employment path. For example, an assessment would be considered to be low-stakes if the outcomes are used only to identify learning outcomes that have been achieved, to diagnose learning obstacles or difficulties that may be hindering progress, or to make adjustments to learning activities to facilitate learners' further progress.

By contrast, high-stakes assessments are assessments where the outcomes can have significant consequences for the future education or employment of the learner. For example, an assessment would be high-stakes if it is used to grant or deny learners access to a higher level of schooling, to place learners into more academic versus less academic streams, to choose a school for a learner to attend in the future, to award or deny certification, or to make decisions about learners' suitability for particular forms of employment.

All assessments can be considered to fall somewhere on a continuum which runs from low-stakes at one end to high-stakes at the other end. For example, examinations by national testing, leading to certification that opens doors for further study or workplace opportunities, are at the high-stakes end of this continuum. Portfolios or journals of learning that are confidential to a learner and to those to whom they give permission of access, are at the low-stakes end, because they are not used by others to make decisions about learners' future education or employment. Assessments where a teacher provides feedback to the learner accompanied by a grade lie in the middle of the continuum. Peer assessment – with observation and feedback provided by a peer to the learner in private – lies nearer to low-stakes, as does self-assessment. Assessments by teachers using tests where the grades are made available to parents or caregivers and to others within the school lie closer towards the high-stakes end of the continuum, particularly if the outcomes can affect progression through the education system and other life chances.

Users of the RFCDC will need to consider the extent to which they should conduct high-stakes assessments. As noted in the preceding section, the overriding purpose of using the RFCDC is to empower learners, and it may be argued that conducting assessments based on the RFCDC for any high-stakes purposes will lead to a significant proportion of learners being disempowered. On the other hand, it may be judged that it is important to lift civic, citizenship and intercultural education out of the status of a less prioritised area within education, and that this can best be achieved by using high-stakes assessments. High-stakes assessments in many education systems are much more likely to have significant effects on the behaviour of both teachers and learners through the washback effect. However, if an assessment is high-stakes, then it is essential that the assessment methods used are reliable, valid and equitable. It would be unethical to make significant decisions about a learner's future on the basis of unreliable, invalid or inequitable assessment outcomes. (The issues of reliability, validity and equity in assessment will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.) That said, it is equally important to stress that low-stakes assessments must also have high levels of reliability and

validity if they are used to provide guidance to learners concerning their progress and future learning goals or to identify learning obstacles and difficulties – this is because if such guidance is based on unreliable or invalid assessments, the guidance could have serious detrimental consequences for, or obstruct, the learners' future learning.

It may be judged that the only suitable assessment types for use in relationship to the RFCDC are those that lie towards the low-stakes end of the continuum, and that high-stakes assessment should never be used under any circumstances. This argument might apply especially to the assessment of learners' values and attitudes, which are highly personal. It may be judged that, in some educational settings, high-stakes assessments of values and attitudes could harm or damage the person and their future prospects, and for this reason should never be used.

Another possibility is for a mixed set of assessment types to be used, in which only low-stakes assessments are used in relation to values and attitudes, but both low-stakes and high-stakes assessments are used in relation to skills, knowledge and critical understanding.

Users of the RFCDC will need to consider these various possibilities and decide upon the course of action that is most suitable within their own education system and cultural setting.

Key idea 6

Low-stakes assessments are assessments that do not have a significant impact on learners' future education or employment, whereas high-stakes assessments are assessments where the outcomes have significant consequences for the future education or employment of learners.

Key idea 7

High-stakes assessments should only be used if it is judged that reliable, valid and equitable assessment methods are available.

Key idea 8

Users of the RFCDC will need to consider the extent to which they should use high-stakes assessments, especially in relationship to the assessment of learners' values and attitudes – it may be considered to be inappropriate to use high-stakes assessments of learners' values and attitudes in many education systems and cultural settings.

Key idea 9

Users of the RFCDC may choose to employ a mixed set of assessment types, in which only low-stakes assessments are used in relation to values and attitudes, but both low-stakes and high-stakes assessments are used in relation to skills, knowledge and critical understanding.

The use of assessment for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes

In the preceding discussion, the following four purposes of assessment were singled out as being especially useful for promoting learners' competences for democratic culture.

- Using assessment to identify learners' present progress and future learning goals, and to understand the learning processes in which they have engaged, so that subsequent teaching and learning activities can be optimally tailored to enable learners to achieve their future goals (assessment for a formative purpose).
- Using assessment to identify specific learning obstacles or difficulties that learners might be experiencing, so that subsequent teaching can be tailored to aid learners in overcoming them (assessment for a diagnostic purpose).
- Using assessment to monitor whether learners are making expected or sufficient progress in their mastery of the intended competences (assessment for a monitoring purpose).
- Using assessment to obtain a description and understanding of learners' proficiency in the use of the intended competences at the end of a period of learning (assessment for a summative purpose).

We will consider each of these four purposes in turn.

The essential characteristic of using assessment for a formative purpose is that the information that is obtained from the assessment is used: (i) to identify what has and has not yet been learned; (ii) to understand the learning processes in which the learner has engaged; (iii) to establish appropriate future learning goals for the learner; and (iv) to plan further learning activities that will enable the learner to progress and achieve those new goals. All of these can be done by the teacher either alone or in consultation with the learner. The assessment must therefore take place *during* learning in order to improve it – in this sense it is an assessment *for* learning. When assessment is used for a formative purpose, in order for its usefulness to the learner to be maximised, the assessment should:

- be appropriately timed;
- be sensitive and constructive and foster the learner's motivation for learning;
- raise the learner's awareness of his or her own learning;
- be tailored to the individual learner's needs;
- set goals for the learner that are achievable but at an appropriate level of challenge;
- promote the learner's understanding of the goals and the criteria for success;
- raise the learner's awareness of the opportunities and activities that are available for learning, and help the learner to understand how to improve;
- give clues to the learner on how to bridge gaps;
- help to develop the learner's own self-assessment skills.

When assessment is used for a diagnostic purpose, the assessment is instead focused on identifying specific learning obstacles or difficulties that a learner might be

experiencing, so that subsequent teaching and learning activities can be tailored to aid the learner in overcoming these obstacles or difficulties. Hence, using assessment for a diagnostic purpose is similar to using assessment for formative purposes because it is, once again, assessment *for* learning that takes place *during* the process of learning. Indeed, exactly the same assessment procedures might be used for both formative and diagnostic purposes simultaneously – this is because planning future learning activities that will enable the learner to progress and achieve new goals (a formative purpose) may well require the identification of obstacles or difficulties that the learner is experiencing (a diagnostic purpose) so that the activities can be tailored to aid the learner in overcoming those problems. These obstacles or difficulties may consist of gaps in knowledge, a lack of understanding, misconceptions, lack of specific skills, poor motivation, disengagement from learning, or even a specific learning disability such as dyslexia. Where difficulties or obstacles are identified, it is important to make appropriate adjustments to the teaching and learning approach or activities being used, to enable the learner to overcome or compensate for them, so that learning can progress.

When assessment is used for a monitoring purpose, it is focused on assessing whether learners are making expected or sufficient progress towards the intended learning goals. It takes place *during* the process of learning, but consists of an assessment *of* learning. The aim is to take stock of the extent to which the expected learning goals or outcomes are being achieved midway through the learning process. Assessing learners for the purpose of monitoring their progress may be carried out at several time points during the course of a school year, and the assessment method that is used may be similar to the method that is going to be used at the end of the period of learning. The information that is gathered is typically used to obtain an indication of a learner's interim progress towards the intended learning goals. However, it is also possible to use this same information to revise or adjust the teaching and learning approach or activities, perhaps because the assessment indicates that the learner has a learning gap or difficulty – in this case, the assessment is simultaneously being used for a formative and/or diagnostic purpose.

Finally, when assessment is used for a summative purpose, the goal is to summarise the learner's achievement or proficiency at the *end* of a period of learning or a programme of study. It is explicitly an assessment *of* learning. It is often assumed that using assessment for a summative purpose is equivalent to a high-stakes assessment. This is not necessarily the case. An assessment that has been conducted for a summative purpose is not high-stakes if the information that is obtained through the assessment is only used to provide information about that learner's level of achievement or proficiency at the end of a period of learning and not for any other purpose. Another incorrect assumption that is often made is that using assessment for a summative purpose always involves awarding a mark, score or grade to the learner to reflect his or her overall level of achievement or proficiency. Once again, this is not necessarily the case. Instead, and depending on the particular assessment method that has been used, the assessment outcome may be a much more detailed descriptive profile of achievement or proficiency across several categories of performance. Furthermore, although this kind of assessment, by definition, takes place after learning has occurred, learners may

still be given detailed feedback on which specific learning goals they have and have not achieved, to help them identify learning activities they can undertake in their future lives to pursue the learning outcomes that have not been achieved (a formative purpose). Any one of a wide variety of different methods can be used to summarise learners' achievement or proficiency at the end of a period of learning, including short-answer questions, extended essays, oral presentations, project-based assessments, reflective journals or portfolios. However, several of these methods are actually more suitable for generating a descriptive profile of achievement or proficiency rather than a single summary mark. As we shall see later on in this chapter, assessing learners for a summative purpose in relationship to the RFCDC is most appropriately carried out using descriptive profiles rather than a single overall mark or grade.

Although the distinction between assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning is frequently made in order to distinguish between conducting assessments for formative and diagnostic purposes on the one hand and assessments for monitoring and summative purposes on the other, it should also be noted that assessment *for* learning necessarily always requires some kind of assessment *of* learning. The crucial distinction is between the purposes for which the outcomes of the assessment are used. In addition, and conversely, it could be argued that all assessment *of* learning should always be *for* learning – that is, that the outcomes of assessments should always be used to foster and promote further learning in the future.

It needs to be re-emphasised here that exactly the same assessment method may sometimes be used for all four purposes: to help learning and teaching, to identify learning difficulties, to monitor whether learners are making expected or sufficient progress, and to summarise learners' achievements at the end of a period of learning. For example, essays can be used for all four purposes, as can both project-based assessment and portfolios. In other words, the four purposes of assessment do not necessarily require different assessment methods to be used.

Finally, it should also be reiterated here that all assessments that are conducted, for whatever purpose, need to be both reliable and valid in order to ensure that detrimental consequences for the learner do not arise from the assessment. Indeed, it would be unethical to conduct any educational assessment that is either unreliable or invalid because of the potentially damaging or detrimental consequences that an incorrect and misleading assessment might have for the learners concerned. This applies equally to assessments that are conducted for formative, diagnostic, monitoring or summative purposes.

Key idea 10

Using assessment for a formative purpose involves gathering and interpreting information about the extent and success of an individual's learning, which the learner and/or their teacher can then use to set further learning goals and plan further learning activities that will enable the learner to achieve those goals in the future – it is an assessment *for* learning that takes place *during* learning in order to improve it.

Key idea 11

Using assessment for a diagnostic purpose involves identifying learning obstacles or difficulties that a learner might be experiencing, so that subsequent teaching and learning activities can be tailored to aid that learner in overcoming these obstacles or difficulties – it is therefore another form of assessment *for* learning that takes place *during* the process of learning.

Key idea 12

Using assessment for a monitoring purpose involves assessing whether the learner is making expected or sufficient progress towards the intended learning goals – it takes place *during* the process of learning, and consists of an assessment *of* learning.

Key idea 13

Using assessment for a summative purpose involves assessing the learner's achievement or proficiency at the *end* of a period of learning or a programme of study – it is explicitly an assessment *of* learning.

Key idea 14

Using assessment for a summative purpose is not necessarily a high-stakes assessment and it does not have to involve awarding a single mark or grade to the learner to reflect his or her overall level of achievement or proficiency – a more detailed descriptive profile of achievement or proficiency across several categories of performance may be generated instead.

Key idea 15

The outcome of a single assessment can be used for more than just one of these four purposes, and sometimes the same assessment method (e.g. essays, portfolios) can be used for all four purposes.

Key idea 16

It is unethical to conduct any educational assessment that is either unreliable or invalid, because of the potentially damaging or detrimental consequences that an incorrect and misleading assessment might have for the learners concerned – this applies equally to assessments that are conducted for formative, diagnostic, monitoring or summative purposes.

Achievement and proficiency assessment

Assessment by teachers is usually achievement assessment, where the teacher seeks to establish what and how much a learner has learned from the teaching. Such assessments are normally closely tied to a specific course of learning, programme of teaching or syllabus, for example as presented in a textbook.

In contrast to achievement assessment, proficiency assessment aims to identify the level of performance demonstrated by a learner in general, without reference to a particular course of learning. It takes into account achievement resulting from teaching and learning, but it also includes the results of any informal or non-formal learning that has occurred in situations and contexts outside the classroom. In addition, proficiency assessment may be tied to demonstrations of competence in situations that take place outside the school, for example in activities and interactions with others that occur in the local community. The successful assessment of all these various aspects of proficiency depends crucially on the particular assessment tools that are used.

Both achievement and proficiency assessment are suitable for use in teaching and learning based on the RFCDC, since they have different purposes. Achievement assessment informs teachers and learners about learners' success in a course of learning, whereas proficiency assessment informs them about learners' broader capacities in a wider range of contexts. That said, the overall goal of the RFCDC is to equip learners with competences that will enable them to function as effective and respectful democratic citizens within the wider social, civic or political world beyond the school. In this respect, while teachers are often more interested in achievement assessment, it could be argued that assessments in relationship to the RFCDC should instead be focused on proficiency.

However, assessing proficiency is not easy or straightforward, for several reasons. First, competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue are not something that a person acquires at a particular moment in time and then possesses and uses in all relevant situations for the rest of their life. Competences are activated and used in different ways in different situations, and there may be situations in which an acquired competence is relevant but is not used due to other factors (e.g. anxiety, lack of motivation, a lapse of attention, a failure to recognise the relevance of that competence to that situation, the presence of distractions within the situation, or the characteristics of other people within the situation). For this reason, performing a single assessment in a single situation is unlikely to be sufficient for an assessment of proficiency. Instead, the teacher will need to assess the learner's competences across a range of different situations.

Second, the teacher will also need to take into account the fact that a specific task or context is likely to activate a number of competences rather than just one. This means that, in a proficiency assessment, rather than assessing competences individually across a range of different situations, the teacher needs to assess how the learner activates and uses clusters of competences across a range of different situations. Consequently, the end result will be a descriptive profile of how the learner has used varying sets of competences in multiple contexts.

Third, proficiency assessment requires either the teacher or the learner to identify the specific contexts for use in the assessment. These contexts might include, for example, youth groups or hobby clubs, visits to community organisations or places of religious worship, volunteer work or service-learning activities in the local community, interacting with people from other cultural backgrounds, or collaborative projects with learners in another country or another region of the same country conducted

through social media. The contexts that are used for a proficiency assessment are likely to be specific to the particular local setting in which the assessment takes place. For this reason, teachers and learners will need to identify for themselves the specific contexts in their own settings that are the most suitable for the assessment of the learners' proficiency.

Key idea 17

Achievement assessment establishes what and how much a learner has learned from a specific syllabus or programme of learning, whereas proficiency assessment describes the level of performance demonstrated by a learner in general, without reference to a particular course of learning.

Key idea 18

Given that the overall goal of the RFCDC is to equip learners with competences that will enable them to function as effective and respectful democratic citizens within the wider social, civic or political world beyond the school, it could be argued that proficiency assessment should be used wherever possible in relationship to the RFCDC, rather than achievement assessment.

Key idea 19

Proficiency assessment in relationship to the RFCDC involves assessing the learner's ability to activate and use clusters of competences across a range of different situations, not all of which should be school-based.

Key idea 20

The goal of a proficiency assessment in relationship to the RFCDC is the construction of a descriptive profile of how the learner uses clusters of competences in a range of different situations.

Key idea 21

For conducting proficiency assessments in relationship to the RFCDC, teachers and learners will need to identify for themselves the specific contexts in their own settings that are the most suitable for assessing the learners' proficiency.

Norm-referenced, cohort-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment

Performance on assessment tasks, whether in tests or other kinds of assessment, can be judged through norm-referencing, cohort-referencing or criterion-referencing. Norm-referencing involves comparing the performance of an individual on a test against the performance of a large group of that person's peers on the same test, and locating the position of that individual within the reference group. For example, a standardised reading test might be used to establish the reading level of a learner;

this will involve comparing the performance of the learner in that test against the performance of a large group of other learners who have taken the same test on previous occasions. The scores obtained by the learners on those previous occasions will range from low through medium to high. By comparing the individual learner's score against this range, it is possible to establish whether the learner's reading ability falls towards the bottom end of the range, just below the middle of the range, in the middle of the range, just above the middle of the range, or towards the top end of the range. In order to use this method, however, it is essential that the learner is given exactly the same test under the same conditions as those that were given to the reference group. In addition, it is important that a large representative sample of peers, drawn from the full ability range, is used to establish the reference range of scores. Finally, the peers in the reference group should have the same demographic characteristics as the learner who is being tested. For this reason, a great deal of preparatory work is required before norm-referencing can be used.

A subtype of norm-referencing is cohort-referencing. This occurs when a learner's performance in an assessment is compared against the performance of other learners within their own class or year group (cohort), and only a fixed proportion of the cohort taking the assessment are allowed to obtain particular grades (for example only 30% can get an above-average grade, 40% can get an average grade, while the remaining 30% have to get a below-average grade). Because the learner's outcome depends not only on how well they themselves perform but also on how well others in their cohort perform, exactly the same level of performance can result in grades that vary significantly from one cohort to another.

Criterion-referencing instead requires learners' performance to be judged against a set of pre-specified criteria. The outcome is determined solely on the basis of the learner's own performance, and not in relation to how other learners perform on the assessment task. Using criterion-referencing in assessment requires descriptions of levels of increasing achievement or proficiency, with clear and explicit criteria being specified for each level. Achievement or proficiency may be described either holistically or broken down across a set of categories to yield a descriptive profile. The descriptors that are available as part of the RFCDC can be used as assessment criteria for three levels of achievement or proficiency – basic, intermediate and advanced – across 20 categories (i.e. the 20 competences). The descriptors have been through an extensive testing process to ensure that they are valid for assessing achievement and proficiency. The descriptors therefore provide a sound basis for criterion-referencing and for producing detailed descriptive profiles of individual learners.

Norm-referencing and cohort-referencing have the disadvantage that learners, rather than being encouraged to do their best against a set of specified criteria, are prompted to compare themselves with each other and to compete. For low-performing learners, in particular, this can lead to a notion of deficit and low self-esteem. The message "You have improved your communication skills since we talked last time" can be devalued by the additional information "but you are still below average". Given these concerns, users of the RFCDC should consider avoiding using norm-referencing and cohort-referencing and relying instead only on criterion-referencing, using the RFCDC descriptors as the criteria for assessing the achievement or proficiency level of learners on each of the 20 competences.

Key idea 22

Norm-referenced assessment involves comparing a learner's performance to the performance of a large representative sample of peers who have been drawn from the full ability range, and locating the position of that individual within this reference group.

Key idea 23

Cohort-referenced assessment involves comparing a learner's performance to the performance of other learners within their class or year group (cohort), where only a fixed proportion of the cohort taking the assessment are allowed to obtain particular grades.

Key idea 24

Criterion-referenced assessment involves assessing a learner's performance against a set of pre-specified criteria, where the outcome is determined solely on the basis of the learner's own performance and not in relation to how other learners have performed in the assessment.

Key idea 25

In making assessments of learners' achievement or proficiency, users of the RFCDC should consider employing only criterion-referencing (rather than either norm-referencing or cohort-referencing), and should use the RFCDC descriptors to identify the achievement or proficiency levels of learners on each of the 20 competences.

The role of language in assessment

As discussed in the RFCDC guidance document on the role of language, language is a vital medium through which learners acquire and express their competences for democratic culture. In addition, language plays a central role in assessment, for two main reasons.

First, many assessment methods depend on language as the medium through which the assessment takes place. For example, short-answer questions, extended essays, oral presentations, oral examinations, debate-based assessments and reflective journals all rely on the linguistic abilities of the learner. These methods assume that the learners who are being assessed can comprehend the written or spoken language that is being used and that the learners can express themselves effectively using either spoken or written language. It is therefore possible that all of these assessment methods could underestimate a learner's democratic and intercultural proficiency if the assessment method places excessive demands on the learner's language proficiency.

Second, as we have seen, assessments of competences for democratic culture should ideally employ criterion-based referencing, and the RFCDC descriptors should be used as the criteria for assessing the achievement or proficiency level of the learner

on any given competence. However, many of the descriptors refer explicitly and exclusively to the linguistic behaviour of the learner. This can be readily seen by considering the descriptors below.

- Competence: Valuing human dignity and human rights
  - Descriptor: "Defends the view that no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".
  - Descriptor: "Argues that all public institutions should respect, protect and implement human rights".
- Competence: Civic-mindedness
  - Descriptor: "Expresses a willingness to co-operate and work with others".
  - Descriptor: "Discusses what can be done to help make the community a better place".
- Competence: Knowledge and critical understanding of the world
  - Descriptor: "Can explain why everybody has a responsibility to respect the human rights of others".
  - Descriptor: "Can describe the effects that propaganda has in the contemporary world".

These descriptors begin, respectively, with the words "defends", "argues", "expresses", "discusses", "can explain" and "can describe". These behaviours are inherently linguistic, and they all require the learner to use language for a very specific discursive function: defending, arguing, expressing, discussing, explaining or describing. Furthermore, some of these functions are easier for learners to perform than others (e.g. describing is easier than explaining or defending). Hence, if a learner fails to display the behaviour denoted by a particular descriptor, this could be because the learner has not yet achieved the relevant level of achievement or proficiency that is indexed by that descriptor; alternatively, however, the failure could be due to the learner not yet having achieved the relevant level of linguistic proficiency to be able to use language for the particular discursive function that is referred to by the descriptor. All of these considerations apply when learners are using their first language. However, in the case of learners for whom the language of schooling is not their first language, these considerations apply with even greater force.

It is therefore important for teachers to be sensitive and alert to the language proficiency of the learner who is being assessed and to the language demands that are made by the particular assessment method that is being used. In particular, teachers need to be aware that either the learner's limited language proficiency or the assessment method's excessive language demands, or both, could lead to an underestimation of the learner's level of achievement or proficiency. However, teachers should also bear in mind that "linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills" comprise one of the 20 RFCDC competences that needs to be assessed when conducting assessments in relationship to the RFCDC (see Figure 2.1 and Box 2.2). As such, if a lack of language proficiency is detected during an assessment, this should be factored into the assessment of the learner's linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills.

It is clear that teachers, when conducting assessments, should pay close attention to the linguistic forms that are used by the descriptors. Teachers will also need to

understand how to interpret the language of the descriptors in relationship to the specific behaviours that may or may not be displayed by learners.

Key idea 26

Many assessment methods depend on language as the medium through which the assessment is conducted.

Key idea 27

Many of the descriptors refer explicitly and exclusively to a behaviour that is inherently linguistic, and require the learner to use language for a very specific discursive function (e.g. defending, arguing, expressing, discussing, explaining or describing).

Key idea 28

When making assessments, teachers need to be alert to the language proficiency of the learner and to the language demands that are being made by the particular assessment method that is used – teachers need to be aware that the learner's level of achievement or proficiency may be underestimated if the learner has limited language proficiency or if the assessment method makes excessive language demands on the learner.

The nature of the assessment process

Although there are many different assessment methods, these methods always share some common features. First, all assessments involve making interpretations or inferences from some kind of evidence about a learner's competences. Second, the evidence about a learner's competences that is yielded by an assessment method is rarely exact or precise – there is almost always some imprecision involved. Third, the outcome that is derived through the interpretation or inference is likely to be only an estimate of the learner's actual level of achievement or proficiency in those competences.

It is worth spelling these three points out in a little more detail. First, competences themselves can never be directly observed. Instead, assessment involves collecting evidence from the learner's behaviour in one or more concrete situations and then drawing inferences about their achievement or proficiency in the use of competences on the basis of that evidence.

Second, the behaviour that is captured in the assessment is always just a sample from the full range of behaviour that is produced by that learner in the course of his or her everyday life. Furthermore, this sample is likely to be biased in a number of ways, for example by the characteristics of the particular situations that are used in the assessment, the characteristics of other people who are involved in the situation, the learner's anxiety, tiredness or alertness at the time of the assessment, or the medium through which the assessment takes place (e.g. spoken language, written language, or the performance of a set of behaviours). For this reason, there is almost always some imprecision in the evidence and uncertainty about its accuracy.

Third, having collected the evidence, the assessor then has to make an interpretation or inference about the learner's achievement or proficiency on the basis of that evidence. There are two main difficulties here. First, as we have seen, there are often doubts about the accuracy of the evidence itself; it may also be incomplete or ambiguous, which can mean that it is open to multiple interpretations. Second, the interpretative process itself may be biased by a range of factors, for example by the quality of the training in assessment that the assessor has received, the assessor's experience in conducting assessments, the attentiveness or the tiredness of the assessor, or the assessor's ability to interpret accurately the assessment criteria or descriptors. Given these difficulties, the conclusions that are drawn from the evidence should really be regarded as just an estimate rather than an exact reflection of the learner's actual level of achievement or proficiency.

Well-designed assessments minimise the degree of error or bias in the conclusions that are derived from the evidence by assessors. However, there is still no guarantee of complete accuracy, even when assessments are well designed and conducted appropriately. For this reason, assessment outcomes need to be regarded only as estimates of the learner's actual achievement or proficiency. This applies irrespective of whether the assessment is high- or low-stakes, but the point is especially critical to bear in mind in the case of high-stakes assessments.

Key idea 29

Assessment always involves making interpretations or inferences from evidence that has been collected about learners' achievement or proficiency, and this evidence is rarely exact or precise – for this reason, the conclusions that are drawn about learners on the basis of that evidence should only be regarded as estimates of the learners' actual levels of achievement or proficiency.

The principles of assessment

Given these difficulties and the scope for inaccuracy in assessment that stem from the nature of the assessment process itself, there are certain steps that should be taken to minimise their impact on the end result of an assessment. Most crucially, precautions should be taken to ensure that the assessment is both reliable and valid. In addition, it is important that all assessments conducted in the context of the RFCDC are equitable, respectful of the human rights of the learners who are being assessed, and transparent. Finally, of course, assessments need to be practical so that teachers can administer them within the time and resources that are available to them.

In other words, the assessment of learners' competences for democratic culture should always aim to satisfy the principles of reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality. In this section, we expand on each of these six principles in turn.

Key idea 30

All assessments that are carried out in relationship to the RFCDC should aim to satisfy the principles of reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality.

Reliability

Reliability concerns the extent to which an assessment produces interpretations and conclusions about the learner's competences that are consistent and stable. A reliable assessment is one that is dependable in its outcomes, so that the same outcome would be obtained if the same assessment procedure were to be administered again to the same learner under the same conditions but at a different time and in a different place and with a different assessor.

As we have seen, there are numerous factors that can interfere with the precision of the assessment process and can therefore make an assessment unreliable. For example, learners' performance might vary on different occasions due to fluctuations in their anxiety, tiredness or alertness at the time of the assessment, or because there are ambiguities in the materials or the situations used in the assessment. In addition, an assessor's inferences that are based on the evidence generated by the assessment may vary depending on factors such as the assessor's tiredness or alertness, the quality of the training that they have received in the assessment method, and whether the assessor has a clear understanding of the precise meanings of the competences or the learning outcomes that are being assessed.

It is often thought that reliability only applies to, or is easier to achieve in, quantitative assessments in which a mark, grade or percentage is awarded to learners. This is incorrect. Qualitative assessments are also unreliable if the judgments and inferences that are made by the assessor about a learner's performance vary over time and are unstable and inconsistent. Reliability is never guaranteed in either quantitative or qualitative assessments.

Reliability in assessment is always important, because if the outcomes of an assessment are unreliable, this means that they are unstable and therefore likely to be inaccurate, and so there is little point in conducting the assessment in the first place. Reliability is especially important in high-stakes assessments because the outcomes will affect the future education or employment of learners. For this reason, professional test developers, when they design high-stakes assessments, use various procedures to ensure that the assessment tools they produce have high reliability. For example, there are particular ways of wording questions to eliminate ambiguities, as well as particular ways of asking learners for responses to questions that can help to improve reliability. Developers also often pilot assessment materials and perform item analyses on the pilot data, so that any individual items found to reduce reliability can be discarded from the assessment. In addition, in high-stakes assessments, blind assessment should normally be used, so that those who conduct the assessment do not know anything about the gender or ethnicity of the learners who are being assessed. This is because gender and ethnic biases can sometimes occur in the assessment of learners' work. Where a central examining board is responsible for making judgments about learners' performance, the anonymisation of learners' work in the assessments can help to guard against these kinds of biases influencing the assessment outcomes.

However, it is not only test developers and central examining boards that can take steps to minimise threats to the reliability of assessments. Teachers can also take certain steps to ensure that the assessments they carry out within their classrooms are reliable.

First, it is helpful if teachers undertake training in the use of the assessment tools or methods that they wish to use. Such training can ensure that they are familiar with these methods, understand the problems that can occur during their administration, know how to guard against these problems, and are familiar with the range of possible inferences that can be drawn from the evidence collected from learners using those tools and methods.

A second precaution that teachers can take is to use a set of criteria, or a rubric, to which they can refer when they draw their conclusions about learners' levels of achievement or proficiency (see Box 3.1). Because it provides a standard set of explicit criteria on which the teacher's inferences about the learner's achievement or proficiency can be based, a rubric helps to improve the consistency and stability of the judgments that are made by the teacher. Additional advantages are that a rubric can be used to communicate the expected learning outcomes to learners ahead of participation in the assessment (a key requirement of transparency, which will be discussed further below), and can also be used by learners themselves for self-assessment and for monitoring their own development and progress. As such, rubrics can be very helpful in fostering more effective planning and monitoring of the learning process by learners themselves, which in turn can promote their autonomy in learning as well as their competences. The Appendix at the end of this book provides detailed guidance on how to construct rubrics from the RFCDC competences and descriptors.

Box 3.1

Using rubrics for assessing competences for democratic culture

A rubric is a scoring guide that can be used to evaluate a learner's performance on a specific assessment task (such as an essay, an oral presentation or a co-operative group project). In the case of the RFCDC, rubrics can be easily constructed, using the competences as the dimensions that need to be assessed. The descriptors for those competences can then be used as the criteria that need to be met in order to be credited with performance at a particular level for each of the competences. Because the descriptors have been scaled to three levels of proficiency (basic, intermediate and advanced), there are three-point scales available for each individual competence.

A hypothetical example of a rubric that could be used to capture a learner's performance on a co-operative group project is shown below. In this example, only three competences and only two descriptors for each competence at each level of proficiency have been included, but more competences and more descriptors from the bank of descriptors for each competence might be used, according to the needs of the particular task that is involved and the particular learning outcomes that are being assessed.

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Empathy	Can recognise when a companion needs his/her help. Senses when others get irritated.	Takes other people's feelings into account when making decisions. Expresses concern for other people who are being taken advantage of.	Accurately identifies the feelings of others, even when they do not want to show them. Can describe other people's unique concerns.
Co-operation skills	Builds positive relationships with other people in a group. When working as a member of a group, does his/her share of the group's work.	Works to build consensus to achieve group goals. When working as a member of a group, keeps others informed about any relevant or useful information.	When working with others, supports other people despite differences in points of view. Can persuade other group members to share their relevant and useful knowledge, experience or expertise.
Conflict-resolution skills	Can communicate with conflicting parties in a respectful manner. Can identify options for resolving conflicts.	Can encourage the parties involved in conflicts to actively listen to each other and share their issues and concerns. Can use negotiation skills to resolve conflicts.	Can deal effectively with other people's emotional stress, anxiety and insecurity in situations involving conflict. Can guide conflicting parties to agree on optimal and mutually acceptable solutions to their conflict.

In developing rubrics based on the RFCDC, it needs to be borne in mind that levels of proficiency on different competences are unlikely to correspond to one another. For example, a learner could be at an advanced level on one competence but at a basic level on another. In other words, based on the rubric above, a learner could be scored, for example, as having the following profile: Empathy – advanced; Co-operation skills – intermediate; Conflict-resolution skills – basic.

A third precaution that can be taken to enhance reliability is for the assessment evidence that is generated by the learner to be judged by two or more teachers. Any discrepancies in the inferences that are drawn by the teachers about the learner's level of achievement or proficiency can then be resolved through discussion.

Finally, reliability in assessments, irrespective of whether these assessments are made by teachers or by examining boards, can be enhanced by using a more experienced senior assessor to moderate the outcomes of the assessment. A senior assessor

can check the robustness of the assessment process and the accuracy and appropriateness of the conclusions that have been drawn by assessors about learners' performance. They can also check that clerical errors have not occurred in the course of the assessment. The use of senior assessors is most suitable when a central examining board is responsible for making judgments about learners' performance. However, this strategy can also be employed in schools, where less-experienced teachers can ask their more experienced colleagues to provide feedback on the outcomes of assessments they have conducted, to ensure that their judgments are reliable.

All of these actions to enhance the reliability of assessments are extremely important for the credibility of the outcomes of assessments, so that learners and their parents or caregivers can have confidence in the outcomes. They are particularly important in the case of assessments that are going to be used for high-stakes purposes. However, even in the case of assessments that are conducted for low-stakes purposes, several of these actions can still be extremely useful. For example, training teachers in the use of assessment methods, using explicit criteria or rubrics to help with the interpretation of the evidence that is produced by learners during the assessment process, and seeking guidance from more experienced colleagues, can all be employed with considerable benefit with low-stakes assessments.

Key idea 31

Reliability concerns the extent to which an assessment produces interpretations and conclusions about the learner's competences that are consistent and stable.

Key idea 32

Reliability in assessment is important, because if the outcomes of an assessment are unreliable, this means that they are unstable and therefore likely to be inaccurate, and so there is little point in conducting the assessment in the first place.

Key idea 33

Reliability in assessment can be enhanced by: (i) teachers undertaking training in the use of assessment methods; (ii) using explicit criteria or rubrics to which teachers can refer when they make their inferences about learners' levels of achievement or proficiency; (iii) using two or more teachers to make assessments, who can then resolve discrepancies in their judgments through discussion; and (iv) using a more experienced colleague to check and moderate the outcomes of the assessment process.

Key idea 34

For conducting assessments of learners' achievement or proficiency in the use of the 20 competences specified by the RFCDC, the descriptors that are provided for the competences can be used to construct rubrics, according to the needs of the specific task that is involved and the particular learning outcomes that are being assessed – guidance on how to construct rubrics for use in assessments based on the RFCDC is provided in the Appendix at the end of this book.

Key idea 35

Actions to enhance the reliability of assessments are especially important for the credibility of the outcomes of high-stakes assessments – however, training teachers in assessment, providing explicit criteria or rubrics for teachers to use in assessment, and seeking guidance from more experienced colleagues can also be employed to enhance the reliability of low-stakes assessments.

Validity

Validity concerns the extent to which the inferences and conclusions that are drawn from the evidence collected during an assessment accurately describe a learner's level of proficiency or achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and not of some other unintended outcomes or extraneous factors. In other words, validity refers to the extent to which the assessment outcomes accurately assess what the assessment was designed to assess. For example, a task designed to assess a subset of the learner's competences for democratic culture might require the learner to comprehend linguistic material and to produce a verbal response, to a high level of proficiency. In such a situation, it may be the case that learners who have a low level of linguistic and communicative skills are assessed as having low levels of proficiency in all 20 democratic competences (rather than only being assessed as having low levels of linguistic and communicative skills). Similarly, when students' contributions are observed in an assessment task that requires learners to collaborate, interact and talk with peers, those learners' personalities might be assessed rather than their democratic and intercultural competences. A third example is provided by the situation where a digital medium is used to collect evidence about learners' competences (e.g. e-portfolios). In this case, the assessment might be assessing learners' proficiency in using digital technology, rather than their competences for democratic culture.

It should be noted that validity is different from reliability. Reliability is a necessary condition for validity – if an assessment is unreliable, it cannot be valid. This is because if an assessment is unreliable, it means that something other than the learner's level of competence (e.g. the assessor's training, skills or levels of alertness, or the time and place of the assessment) is influencing the outcome of the assessment, and therefore the assessment is not assessing what it has been designed to assess (i.e. the learner's level of competence). However, reliability is not a sufficient condition for validity. Even when an assessment method is known to be reliable (i.e. it produces stable and consistent outcomes), it still might not be valid (i.e. it might not accurately describe the achievement of the intended learning outcomes because it instead describes some unintended factor, such as the learner's linguistic capabilities, personality or digital competence).

As with reliability, a common misperception is that validity applies only to quantitative assessment. It is not only judgments based on quantitative scores or grades that may be invalid; judgments drawn from qualitative assessments can also be invalid if the inferences that are drawn from the assessment are inaccurate due to the fact that they fail to factor in the possible effects of irrelevant or extraneous factors (such as linguistic capabilities, personality or digital competence).

In the context of the RFCDC, it is important to use assessment methods that have good validity, so that they enable accurate conclusions to be drawn about a learner's level of achievement or proficiency. Methods that have low validity should never be used, because such methods provide misleading descriptions of learners' levels of achievement or proficiency. This could then divert their future learning in an inappropriate direction, undermine their trust in the education process, or even endanger their willingness to engage in further learning. In the case of high-stakes assessments, validity is especially important, because the outcomes will affect the future education or employment of learners. However, validity is also important in low-stakes assessments, so that inaccurate and misleading advice or feedback is never given to learners on the basis of invalid assessments.

There are various practical actions that can be taken to enhance the validity of assessments. First, because a method cannot yield valid inferences and interpretations unless it is reliable, it is important to take action to enhance the reliability of the assessment by using the precautions described in the preceding section. These include teachers undertaking training in the use of the method, using explicit criteria or rubrics for guiding judgments, and asking more experienced colleagues to moderate or provide feedback on the outcomes of assessments.

Second, there are various technical procedures that can be used when constructing assessments, to ensure that they have a high level of validity (especially content, convergent, discriminant and predictive validity). These procedures are often used by professional test developers when they are designing assessments for large-scale high-stakes purposes. In the case of small-scale classroom assessments linked to the RFCDC, however, another important form of validity that needs to be considered is face validity. This involves examining whether the assessment method looks as if it assesses what it is intended to assess. Face validity therefore concerns the appearance of the assessment, and whether learners and other stakeholders (e.g. learners' parents, the school principal or other teachers within the school) can readily see that it is indeed assessing the intended learning outcomes. As a general rule of thumb, assessment methods that have good face validity inspire more confidence that they are indeed assessing learners' attainment of the intended learning outcomes. For this reason, it can be helpful to ask colleagues within the school to comment in advance on the face validity of assessment tasks that are going to be used, and to only use assessment methods that are found to have good face validity.

A third precaution that can be taken is to think about the extent to which the assessment task is coherent and consistent with the particular learning outcomes that are supposed to be assessed. This requires identifying the learning outcomes that are being assessed, and then thinking through the specific types of evidence that might be yielded by the assessment task that would relate to each individual learning outcome (i.e. the different ways in which each competence that is being assessed could be used and applied by the learner in the context of the assessment task). If a task cannot generate suitable evidence for all of the learning outcomes that need to be assessed, then it should be avoided.

A fourth precaution is to think through the practical elements of the method that is going to be used, and to consider whether they are appropriate for the learners who are going to be assessed or whether the demands that they make could limit

the performance of the learners in some way. Most obviously, thought should be given to whether any verbal instructions, directions or questions to be given to the learners are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, given the language abilities of the learners who are going to be assessed. Likewise, attention should be given to the demands that are made by methods that employ information technology.

A fifth action that can be used to enhance the validity of the interpretations that are made about learners' achievement or proficiency is to use triangulation. This involves using more than a single assessment method. The rationale for doing this is that all assessment methods are likely to have their own inherent biases and limitations. Using multiple methods means that the strengths of one method can compensate for the limitations of another method. Consequently, if there is a convergent core of evidence that arises from the use of different methods, this gives confidence that the inferences that are being made about the competences of the learner are not unduly affected by the biases or limitations of any single method.

Key idea 36

Validity concerns the extent to which the inferences and conclusions that are drawn from the evidence collected during an assessment accurately describe a learner's level of proficiency or achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and not of some other unintended or extraneous factors.

Key idea 37

If an assessment outcome is unreliable, it cannot be valid (because unreliability means that something other than the learner's level of competence is influencing the outcome of the assessment). However, if an assessment outcome is reliable, this does not necessarily mean that it is valid (because even in cases where assessment outcomes are consistent and stable, they could nevertheless still be determined by an extraneous factor, such as the linguistic proficiency of the learner or the learner's personality).

Key idea 38

Validity in assessment can be enhanced by: (i) taking steps to ensure that the assessment is reliable; (ii) using assessment methods that have good face validity so that their use can be justified to other stakeholders; (iii) considering the extent to which the assessment task is coherent and consistent with the learning outcomes that are supposed to be assessed; (iv) thinking through in advance the practical elements of the assessment to ensure that they will not unduly limit the performance of the learners; and (v) using more than a single assessment method (i.e. triangulation).

Key idea 39

Actions to enhance the validity of assessments are especially important for the credibility of the outcomes of high-stakes assessments – however, validity is also important in low-stakes assessments, so that inaccurate or misleading advice or feedback is never given to learners on the basis of invalid assessments.

Equity

Equity means that assessments should be fair and should not favour or disadvantage any particular group or individual. Equity in assessment ensures that all learners, regardless of their demographic or other characteristics:

- have had fair and equal opportunities to attain the learning outcomes that are going to be assessed;
- have an equal opportunity to access and use the assessment method in a comparable manner to other learners;
- have an equal opportunity to display their level of achievement or proficiency through the use of that assessment method;
- have inferences and interpretations drawn about their achievement or proficiency that are comparable in their levels of reliability and validity to those that are drawn about the achievement or proficiency of other learners.

Inequity can stem from a variety of sources. For example, an assessment that requires learners to have access at home to a range of different information sources (such as books) or to specialised technological equipment (such as a mobile phone or a computer) could discriminate against those who do not have such access or only have limited access. Likewise, an assessment that requires learners to have background knowledge of the culture of the majority cultural group could discriminate against learners from minority groups, as could an assessment that relies on the language of schooling when this language is not the learner's own first language. In addition, some disabilities (such as dyslexia or visual impairment) can lead to inequity in assessment if appropriate accommodations are not made to the assessment process to compensate for those disabilities.

There are numerous actions that can be taken to ensure equity in assessment:

- avoid assessment methods that are known to produce biased outcomes for members of specific groups;
- take into account the possible effects of the learner's cultural background, personal history and opportunities to attain the learning outcomes when interpreting the evidence that has been collected during the assessment;
- ensure that the assessment method or task does not rely on any material that might be construed as being stereotyping of or disparaging towards specific subgroups within the population;
- ensure that any implicit or background knowledge required for performing well on the assessment does not impact negatively on specific subgroups of learners who may not have access to that knowledge;
- ensure that all contexts that are used for the assessment are familiar to all learners who are being assessed, not just to some of them;
- avoid assumptions about the availability of learning resources at home and about learners' ability to access libraries, IT facilities, community facilities or services;
- avoid assumptions about the digital skills of learners;
- ensure that the complexity of the language that is used in the assessment does not impact negatively on the performance of specific subgroups of learners;

- make reasonable and appropriate accommodations and adjustments to the assessment process for learners who have specific disabilities (such as dyslexia or visual impairment).

Key idea 40

Equity means that assessments should be fair and should not favour or disadvantage any particular group or individual.

Key idea 41

Inequity can stem from a wide variety of sources – economically disadvantaged learners, ethnic minority learners and learners with a disability are particularly at risk of discrimination if action is not taken to ensure equity in assessment.

Key idea 42

Actions that can be taken to ensure equity in assessment include: (i) taking into account the possible effects of the learner's material circumstances and cultural background; (ii) avoiding the use of assessment material that might be construed as being stereotyping of or disparaging towards specific subgroups within the population; (iii) ensuring that all contexts that are used for the assessment are familiar to all learners; (iv) ensuring that all resources required for the assessment are available to all learners; and (v) making reasonable and appropriate accommodations and adjustments to the assessment process for learners who have specific disabilities.

Respectfulness

A further assessment principle of particular importance in the context of assessing competences for democratic culture is respectfulness. Assessment that is respectful is likely to motivate learners to accept and understand the assessment and its purposes when they might not otherwise do so. The principle of respectfulness is not usually included in traditional lists of assessment principles. However, this principle is of considerable importance in the context of assessments that are conducted in relationship to the RFCDC.

First and foremost, respectfulness means that the assessment procedures that are used should always respect the dignity and the rights of the learner who is being assessed. Learners' rights are defined by the European Convention on Human Rights[2] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,[3] and they include, *inter alia*, the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and freedom from discrimination. Assessment methods or procedures (and any other education practices) that violate one or more of these rights of learners should not be used.

In its interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights explicitly allows freedom of expression even in cases where the views that are expressed are regarded as offensive, shocking or disturbing, because

2. Available at: www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.
3. Available at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf.

freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society. However, the Court also holds that, in the case of forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify hatred based on intolerance, it may be necessary to sanction or even prevent such forms of expression. This is because tolerance and respect for the equal dignity of all human beings constitute a further essential foundation of a culturally diverse democratic society.[4]

The principle of respectfulness therefore means that learners should not be sanctioned or censured in an assessment merely because the views that they express in the assessment are offensive, shocking or disturbing. However, learners may be censured in an assessment if the expression of their views constitutes hate speech in that it spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred based on intolerance. If they do produce hate speech, they should be challenged, and these expressions should be used as a learning opportunity to explore how the learner might be helped to develop empathy, respect and a sense of human dignity for all. Thus, assessment, if conducted in respectful ways, can turn a problematic behaviour into a positive turning point in the education process.

In the case of assessments based on the RFCDC, education practitioners therefore need to make careful judgments concerning assessments in which learners are found to express opposition to valuing human dignity and human rights, valuing cultural diversity and valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law. It is crucial that such opposition is only challenged in situations where the learner spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred.

The principle of respectfulness does not only involve respecting the human rights of learners – it also involves respecting the dignity of learners. As such, assessments that are conducted in relationship to the RFCDC should also observe the following general rules:

- Learners have a right to privacy and confidentiality wherever possible, especially in relation to their values and attitudes.
- Learners should not be placed under continual stress by being constantly assessed.
- There is a need for sensitivity when revealing assessment results to learners.
- Feedback to learners from assessments should focus on positive rather than negative outcomes, mainly on learners' achievements rather than their deficiencies.
- There may be cases and issues where assessments should not be conducted because the issues or topics are too sensitive for the learners concerned.
- Special precautions should also be taken where the outcomes of an assessment will be used for high-stakes purposes, for example to decide if a learner can continue to the next level of education or is suitable for particular forms of employment when they leave school.

In addition, users of the RFCDC may wish to consider whether, in order to respect the rights and dignity of learners, learners have a right for the values, attitudes, beliefs

4. See: European Court of Human Rights (2020), *Hate speech*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at: www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Hate_speech_ENG.pdf.

and behaviours which they have exhibited at earlier points in their development to be forgotten, to avoid prejudicial judgments being made about them by those who might have access to their record of education in the future. It may be argued that there should be no permanent track record of learners' values, attitudes and beliefs, because this violates their right to privacy. Alternatively, it may be argued that only acceptable or positive values, attitudes and beliefs should be traceable through assessment records (and that these records should therefore not document any unacceptable speech or behaviours that have violated or aimed to violate other people's dignity or human rights, because this documentation could later harm the learner). Another possibility is that, if learners engage in behaviours or hold values, attitudes or beliefs that are democratically unacceptable, but then progress in their development, they should have the right for their previous behaviours, values, attitudes or beliefs to be removed from their education records. Users of the RFCDC should consider this range of possibilities, and decide upon the course of action that is most suitable in their own education context, bearing in mind the need to ensure that assessment should always respect the dignity and rights of the learner who is being assessed.

Key idea 43

Respectfulness means that the assessment procedures that are used in relationship to the RFCDC should always respect the dignity and the rights of the learner who is being assessed.

Key idea 44

Respecting learners' rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and freedom from discrimination means that learners should not be sanctioned or censured in an assessment merely because the views which they express in that assessment are offensive, shocking or disturbing – in other words, learners' right to express opposition to valuing human dignity and human rights, valuing cultural diversity and valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law should be respected.

Key idea 45

However, learners may be censured in an assessment if the expression of their views constitutes hate speech in that it spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred based on intolerance – if a learner produces hate speech during an assessment, they should be challenged, and their expressions should be used as a learning opportunity to explore how the learner might be helped to develop empathy, respect and a sense of human dignity for all.

Key idea 46

The principle of respectfulness also involves respecting the dignity of learners, which includes: (i) respecting learners' rights to privacy and confidentiality wherever possible; (ii) being sensitive to learners' needs when revealing assessment results to

learners; (iii) focusing on positive rather than negative outcomes of assessments; (iv) avoiding assessment in situations where the issues or topics are too sensitive for the learners concerned; and (v) taking special precautions where the outcomes of an assessment may be used for high-stakes purposes.

Key idea 47

Users of the RFCDC should consider whether, in order to respect the rights and dignity of learners, learners have a right for the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours which they have exhibited at earlier points in their development to be forgotten, to avoid prejudicial judgments being made about them by those who might have access to their record of education in the future – users should consider the range of options that are available on this issue, before deciding on the course of action that is most suitable in their own educational context.

Transparency

Transparency means that learners should receive accurate and clear information about the assessment process. A transparent assessment procedure is therefore one in which learners are explicitly informed in advance about the purpose of the assessment, the learning outcomes that are going to be assessed, the types of assessment methods or tasks that are going to be used, and the assessment criteria. In the case of quantitative assessments, transparency also involves providing learners with explicit information about how marks, scores or grades will be calculated. In order to assist transparency, learners can be provided with examples of assessed materials, which may be annotated. In addition, dialogue between the teacher and learners about the assessment process should take place, to address and discuss any queries that learners may have.

Transparency helps to ensure that learners know what is expected of them. If this kind of information is not provided, then learners will need to make guesses about what is required in order to perform well in the assessment. These guesses may be more or less accurate, and any misconceptions that learners might have about the assessment process can impact negatively on their assessment outcomes. A lack of transparency can therefore contribute to a lack of both equity and validity for those learners who hold misconceptions.

One action that can be taken to enhance transparency is to use rubrics. An advantage of rubrics is that, by providing explicit descriptions of expected learning outcomes, they help to communicate these outcomes to learners. In addition, as has already been noted, using rubrics to enhance learners' knowledge of the expected learning outcomes can in turn lead to more effective planning and monitoring of the learning process by learners themselves, the promotion of learners' autonomy in learning, and learners' improved performance in subsequent assessments.

For these various reasons, ensuring transparency in assessment is important. Assessments that are conducted in relationship to the RFCDC should always follow this principle and use methods that are transparent and comprehensible to learners.

Key idea 48

Transparency means that learners should receive accurate and clear information about the assessment process.

Key idea 49

Transparency helps to ensure that learners know what is expected of them in the assessment – if transparent information is not provided, then learners will need to make guesses about what is required in the assessment, and if their guesses are incorrect, this can undermine both the equity and the validity of the assessment.

Key idea 50

Rubrics may be used to enhance transparency in assessment, as well as the reliability, validity and equity of the assessment process – rubrics can also help to promote learners' autonomy, planning and monitoring of their own learning process.

Practicality

The final assessment principle is practicality. This means that any assessment method or task that is used should be feasible, given the resources, time and practical limitations that apply. A practical assessment procedure does not make unreasonable demands on the material and financial resources that are available, or on the time that is available to the learner and the teacher.

Some general rules of thumb that can help to ensure practicality are as follows:

- only make assessments that are required to assess the specific learning outcomes that need to be assessed;
- do not repeat assessments unnecessarily;
- only make assessments for which the teacher or the assessor has the necessary knowledge and skills to administer;
- only use assessments for which the necessary material and financial resources are available;
- only use assessments for which the volume of assessed work is manageable and does not overload either the learner or the teacher;
- only use assessments for which the necessary time is available, and always allow sufficient time not only to develop and administer the assessment, but also to make interpretations and draw conclusions about the learners' levels of achievement or proficiency from the assessment.

Key idea 51

Practicality means that any assessment method or task that is used should be feasible, given the resources, time and practical limitations that apply.

Key idea 52

Some general rules of thumb that can help to ensure practicality include: (i) only make assessments that are required to assess the specific learning outcomes that

need to be assessed; (ii) do not repeat assessments unnecessarily; (iii) only make assessments for which the teacher or the assessor has the necessary knowledge and skills to administer; (iv) only use assessments for which the necessary material and financial resources are available; and (v) only use assessments for which the volume of assessed work is manageable and for which the necessary time is available.

Some concluding comments on the six assessment principles

It should be noted that five of the six assessment principles apply not only to the assessment method itself but also to the interpretations and conclusions that are drawn from the results of assessments. Interpretations and conclusions about learners or subgroups of learners that are unreliable, invalid, inequitable, disrespectful and not transparent should never be drawn from an assessment that has been conducted in relation to the RFCDC. Indeed, it can be argued that it is unethical to conduct any educational assessment that violates these five principles, either because of the potentially damaging or detrimental consequences that inaccurate and misleading assessments might have for the learners concerned, or because of the discriminatory, unjust or unwarranted inferences about learners that might be drawn from the assessment, or because of the violation of the learners' dignity and rights that is entailed.

In addition, interpretations of the outcomes of assessments should never extend beyond the evidence that is available. For example, the outcomes from the assessment of an individual learner should not be used to make the claim that the learner is more or less competent than most other learners of his or her age if there is no information available about the performance of a representative sample of learners on that same assessment. Likewise, overgeneralising the outcomes of assessing learners from a single classroom and making broad claims about differences between the achievement or proficiency of males versus females or of majority versus minority ethnic groups should never be done, as this would exceed the scope of the sample of assessment evidence that has been collected.

Finally, it is worth noting that the assessment principles that have been discussed in this chapter are fully in accordance with the ethical principles for use in education that have been developed by the Council of Europe in the ETINED project.[5] These ethical principles include, *inter alia*, the need for transparency, respect for others, fairness and equity, all of which are included in the set of assessment principles that should be used when planning and designing assessments for use in relationship to the RFCDC.

Key idea 53

Inferences, interpretations and conclusions about learners or subgroups of learners that are unreliable, invalid, inequitable, disrespectful and not transparent should never be drawn from an assessment that has been conducted in relation to the RFCDC.

5. Smith I. and Hamilton T. (2016), *ETINED: Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education*, *Vol. 2 – Ethical principles*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at: https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806c90cd.

Key idea 54

Interpretations of the outcomes of assessments should never extend beyond the evidence that is available.

Key idea 55

The assessment principles that have been discussed in this chapter are fully in accordance with the ethical principles for use in education that have been developed by the Council of Europe in the ETINED project, which include, *inter alia*, the need for transparency, respect for others, fairness and equity.

Who should conduct assessments?

It is often assumed that assessments need to be conducted by teachers or by specially trained assessors. However, assessments can also be carried out by learners themselves or by one or more peers. That said, if self-assessment or peer assessment is used, the teacher will need to provide guidance or assistance to learners to ensure that the assessments take place in an appropriate manner in order to achieve their intended goals. Another possibility is co-assessment, which enables the learner or peers to conduct the assessment (under some form of teacher guidance) but also allows the teacher to moderate or adjust the final outcome yielded by the assessment.

Self-assessment and peer assessment have multiple benefits. First, they enable learners to acquire a much better and clearer understanding of the assessment criteria, the learning outcomes, and the level of performance that is expected, especially if a rubric is used. Second, they improve learners' self-monitoring of the learning process and autonomy in learning. Third, they improve learner engagement through enhanced motivation. Fourth, peer assessment has been found to promote learners' co-operation skills, and to strengthen subsequent co-operative learning and group work within the classroom.

However, it is important to ensure that reliability and validity are not compromised in either self-assessment or peer assessment. In self-assessment, it is possible for learners to overestimate their own competences to enhance their self-image and self-esteem. This problem can be managed by allowing the outcomes of the assessments to remain private and confidential to the learner, by providing very clear guidance to learners in advance of them making their self-assessments, and by never using self-assessment outcomes for high-stakes purposes.

There are also challenges associated with the reliability and validity of peer assessments. These include peers' judgments being influenced by the nature of their relationship with the learner who is being assessed (especially if they hold very positive or negative attitudes towards them), the popularity of the peer within the classroom, inter-peer power relations, the desire to not upset the learner by giving a poor outcome, and possibly even collusion over the outcome of the assessment. It can also be difficult to maintain the confidentiality of the outcomes of the assessment when peer assessments are conducted. Some of these problems can be mitigated by providing clear guidance to learners in advance of them making peer assessments, by never using the outcomes of peer assessment for high-stakes purposes, and by

using multiple peers, rather than just one, to conduct the assessment of each learner. One further strategy that may be used to ensure reliability and validity in both self-assessment and peer assessment is to use co-assessment, where the teacher shares the responsibility for the final outcome of the assessment.

Both self-assessment and peer assessment are powerful tools for promoting active learning, critical reflection and autonomy in learners. However, due to the challenges associated with the reliability and validity of both forms of assessment, integrating them successfully into classroom practice requires careful planning and clear guidance being provided to learners by the teacher.

Key idea 56

Assessments may be carried out not only by teachers and trained assessors but also by learners themselves (self-assessment) and peers (peer assessment), and co-assessment can also be used.

Key idea 57

There are multiple benefits to self-assessment and peer assessment, including: (i) enabling learners to acquire a better understanding of the assessment criteria, learning outcomes and the level of performance that is expected; (ii) improving learners' self-monitoring of the learning process and autonomy in learning; (iii) improving learner engagement through enhanced motivation; and (iv) in the case of peer assessment, promoting learners' co-operation skills.

Key idea 58

There are challenges associated with the reliability and validity of both self-assessment and peer assessment, but various steps can be taken to deal with these challenges, including: (i) providing very clear guidance to learners in advance of them making either self-assessments or peer assessments; (ii) never using self-assessment or peer assessment outcomes for high-stakes purposes; (iii) in self-assessment, allowing the outcomes to remain private and confidential to the learner; (iv) in peer assessment, using multiple peers, rather than just a single peer, to conduct the assessment of each learner; and (v) using co-assessment, in which the teacher or a trained assessor moderates or adjusts the final outcome of the assessment.

The need for users of the RFCDC to make their own assessment decisions

An important assumption underlying the RFCDC is that, while it is possible to outline optimal ways in which the Framework can be implemented, there are always specific conditions and circumstances in any given local context that might well require the Framework to be adapted during its implementation. For this reason, users should make their own decisions about precisely how to apply the RFCDC, to ensure that its use is appropriate and suitable for their own national, cultural and educational contexts.

It is hoped that the guidance on assessment in this book will be useful and supportive to users of the RFCDC. We have tried to offer a wide range of suggestions concerning how assessments may be conducted in a manner that is compatible with the principles of the RFCDC. However, it is recognised that not all aspects of this guidance may be suitable for all educational contexts, and our intention is not to be overly prescriptive. Learners' progress in mastering the 20 competences can be facilitated by using the assessment practices that have been outlined in this chapter, but users should consider the relevant issues as they have been outlined here, and then make their own decisions about how assessments should be conducted in the light of those considerations. All decision making is very deliberately left to local policy makers, school principals and teachers, because they are the experts who have the detailed knowledge and understanding of the specific educational, cultural and national contexts in which they are operating. This means that they are the most suitable individuals to make decisions concerning implementation that are tailored appropriately to their contexts.

Key idea 59

Local education policy makers, school principals and teachers should make the concrete decisions about exactly how assessments should be conducted in relationship to the RFCDC, taking into account the guidance and considerations that have been outlined in this book, because they are the individuals who have the most detailed knowledge and understanding of the specific national, cultural and educational contexts in which they are operating.

In this chapter, we have reviewed general issues and principles that are involved in conducting assessments in relationship to the RFCDC. In the next chapter, we review some of the specific assessment methods that may be used to collect the evidence from learners that can then be used to draw inferences and conclusions about their levels of achievement and proficiency in using and applying their competences for democratic culture.

Chapter 4

Methods for assessing competences for democratic culture, with concrete examples

In this chapter, we present a selection of methods that can be used to collect evidence about learners' achievement and proficiency in using competences for democratic culture. All of the methods included here have been judged to be suitable for assessing learners' competences in a manner that is consistent with the principles of the RFCDC and with the principles of assessment that were discussed in the preceding chapter. Furthermore, all of these methods are currently being used in one or more countries in Europe, and they are therefore tried and tested methods that are known to be practicable.

Judgments about the suitability of these assessment methods for assessing competences for democratic culture were made in accordance with the conceptualisation of these competences in the RFCDC. As we noted in Chapter 2, according to the RFCDC, competences are rarely activated and used individually – instead, they are much more likely to be applied in clusters. Furthermore, the competences making up these clusters will vary depending on the situation and the specific demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by that situation. However, in addition, situations themselves change over time. For this reason, the RFCDC proposes that

an effective response requires constant monitoring of the situation and appropriate ongoing adjustment of the set of competences being used. In other words, a competent individual activates and applies clusters of competences in a dynamic and adaptive manner to meet the constantly shifting demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations. Three illustrations of how clusters of competences might be used in this way were provided in Box 2.3 in Chapter 2.

This view of how competences are used presents challenges for assessment. It implies that the assessment methods that are used should be able to provide a picture of one or more of the following: (i) the learner's ability to mobilise and apply competences within concrete situations in a manner that is appropriate given the specific demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by those situations; (ii) the learner's ability to mobilise and apply in an appropriate manner clusters of competences within concrete situations; and (iii) the learner's ability to adapt and adjust their use of competences as the circumstances within situations change. All of the methods that are included in this chapter have been judged to be able to capture one or more of these three abilities.

In presenting each of these methods, we will first provide a general characterisation and description of the method. This will be followed by: the age of the learners who can be assessed using the method; who can conduct the assessment using the method; the educational purposes for which the method can be used (formative, diagnostic, monitoring or summative); and the specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method. In addition, for each method, summary judgments are provided about the validity, reliability, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method for assessing the competences specified by the RFCDC.

Following this general presentation of the method, one or more concrete examples of how the method is currently used within particular countries will be provided. The purpose here is to illustrate the use of the method in practice and to show how the method may be adapted for use within a particular national, cultural or educational context.

The methods presented here (and the countries that have provided the examples) are the following:

1. Dialogue-based assessment (Finland, Norway)
2. Activity-based self-assessment (Ireland, Germany)
3. Observational assessment (North Macedonia)
4. Oral presentations (Azerbaijan)
5. Debate-based assessment (Cyprus)
6. Role play or simulation assessment (Montenegro, Cyprus)
7. Dynamic assessment (Cyprus)
8. Written answers to open-ended questions and essays (Ireland, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Montenegro)
9. Scenario-based assessment using questioning (Lithuania)
10. Project-based assessment (Belarus, Cyprus)
11. Reflective journals and structured reflective autobiographies (United Kingdom)
12. Portfolios and e-portfolios (Andorra, Norway, Bulgaria, Ireland, Council of Europe)

1. Dialogue-based assessment

General characterisation and description of the method

Discussion between the teacher and the learner can be a very effective and convenient method for assessing all four categories of competences: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. Discussion can be used to identify both strengths and weaknesses in a learner's competences, to identify future learning goals for the learner, to identify possible difficulties or obstacles that might be impeding their progress, and to identify ways of surmounting these difficulties or obstacles. The method is particularly useful when working with learners who might find it difficult to express themselves through writing. The practical demands that the method makes on both the teacher and the learner are relatively low.

The method relies on the use of stimulating questions that encourage the learner to reflect on his or her competences in depth. Questions need to be expressed in appropriate language that the learner can easily understand. The teacher should put the learner at his or her ease, and adjust the wording of questions in a sensitive manner according to the needs of the learner. The questions that are asked should be sequenced to channel the learner's reflections. It is useful to begin by first asking easier questions in order to put the learner at ease – more difficult or more complex questions can be asked later on. After that, it is possible to progress either by asking more general questions first and then funnelling down into more specific questions over details, or by asking specific questions first and then broadening out into more general questions that help to expand and encourage the learner's thinking. Both sequences can be useful. Follow-up probe questions are used to encourage the learner to reflect more deeply (e.g. "what makes you think that?", "is there any other reason you can think of?", "what were you trying to achieve?", or "can you think of a better way to do it?").

Silence may be used to encourage the learner to reflect, allowing time for them to think. If an awkward silence arises while the learner is thinking, the temptation to speak should be resisted. The learner should be allowed time to develop their own line of reflection about their competences.

Pitfalls to avoid include asking difficult questions right at the outset, not giving the learner sufficient time to think, asking too many questions simultaneously, repeatedly asking the same type of question rather than varying the questioning style, not paying sufficient attention to the answers that are given by the learner, and failing to follow up interesting answers that could lead to more profound reflection by the learner.

While the above description is based on a one-to-one situation between the teacher and a single learner, the same method can be used to assess learners in groups. Learners may be put into a small group, with the teacher asking questions. Learners may be asked to engage in a group discussion of specific questions that are set by the teacher, before the teacher then asks the learners for their reflections.

In both cases (one-to-one dialogue and small group discussions), the teacher or the learner(s) can make notes about the conversation after it has occurred. Alternatively, an audio recording of the conversation can be made. Either type of record may be included in a portfolio or e-portfolio in which the learner collects evidence about their competences and levels of proficiency.

This method of assessment fosters learner reflection, and it serves an important pedagogical function by encouraging learners to think more deeply about their competences and how they are developing. Although it is possible that some learners might try to express only those values and attitudes which they think the assessor wants to hear expressed, and might try to suppress other values and attitudes they hold because they think the teacher would disapprove of them, a teacher who is skilled in this assessment method should be able to identify these kinds of attempts through the lines of questioning that are adopted.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

All ages.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

The teacher is the ideal person, although the learner can also be encouraged to make self-assessments during the course of the dialogue. The method can also be used for peer assessments, particularly at older ages.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

The method is ideally suited to conducting assessments for low-stakes formative, diagnostic and monitoring purposes.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method

Values

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

Attitudes

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

Competence

Skills

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

Knowledge and critical understanding

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

Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

Reliability is likely to be medium rather than high, because the outcomes are likely to vary to some extent according to the teacher's or assessor's training, skills and experience in using the method. For this reason, the method should only be used for low-stakes purposes, unless the teacher is highly experienced in the use of the method.

Validity

Validity may be compromised to some degree by the medium level of reliability. However, assuming that the method is used by a trained and experienced teacher, the validity is likely to be high, because the conversational format of the assessment allows the possibility for learners to elaborate on their reflections, and for the teacher to probe learners in depth to resolve unclear issues and to explore complex concepts. In addition, assessments may be made during the conversation not only by the teacher but also by the learner, which allows for the correction of any misunderstandings. As noted above, there is the possibility that at least some learners may try to tailor the values and attitudes that they express to those that they believe the teacher wants to hear, but this possibility may be countered, at least in part, through judicious and sensitive questioning by the teacher.

Equity

The method can be used with all subgroups of learners. For this reason, equity is likely to be high as long as the appropriate actions to ensure equity are taken (see the discussion of equity in Chapter 3), and as long as all learners in a group discussion are given the same opportunities to participate in the discussion. However, teacher awareness is crucial, especially of the learner's linguistic proficiency and cultural background. For example, equity may be compromised if the language in which the dialogue takes place is not the learner's first language.

Respectfulness

If the conditions for equity are met, and if the teacher adopts an appropriate interactional style with learners, respect for the learners' dignity and rights is high.

Transparency

If learners have been made aware of the learning goals before the discussion takes place, and if they are allowed to ask the teacher questions during the discussion, transparency is high.

Practicality

Practicality is high because the method is easy and simple to use, regardless of the age of the learners. It is also suitable for all kinds of work and activities that may be conducted in relationship to the RFCDC.

Concrete examples of how the method is currently used

An example from Finland

This method is widely used in Finland for formative purposes. It requires an appreciative relationship between learners and teachers, with the role of the teacher being to monitor and guide the learner and to enhance the learner's reflections and self-regulation. During this kind of assessment, learners observe and discuss their own learning processes, progress and improvements, successes and achievements, learning objectives and next steps. Teachers guide learners by asking questions and discussing, helping learners to recognise their own strengths, challenges, progress and areas for development, providing feedback, and encouraging learners to continue in their learning and development. This method is also useful for teachers to receive feedback on their own teaching and guidance, enabling them to adjust and adapt their behaviour and teaching methods accordingly.

Encouraging learners' work skills may be used to illustrate the use of the method. In Finland, work skills are defined as the ability to: (i) work both independently and as a member of a group; (ii) plan and assess one's own work; (iii) work responsibly and do one's best; and (iv) interact constructively. Work skills are implemented differently according to the school subject (e.g. in history, social studies and home economics, planning and assessing one's own work would differ). Work skills are viewed as learning to learn skills and as skills that are required for future working life.

If the assessment is conducted by the teacher with an individual learner, the learner would be asked to self-assess either orally or in writing, focusing on their proficiency in a particular work skill. The self-assessment focuses on one work skill at a time, depending on the skill that has been practised while working. The main idea is that the learner understands where he or she has succeeded, and how to improve the skill next time. If the assessment is conducted by a peer or in a group, instructions are given by the teacher, and these are considered carefully before the peer or group work begins. For example, if learners are assessing their own ability to work as a member of a group, they might be asked to consider the following questions:

- How did I succeed in working as a group member?
- While working with the others, did I try to do my best?
- Where did we succeed as a group?
- Did we achieve the goals that were set for the job?
- How could I improve my skills in group work next time?
- Did I value the diversity of opinions in the group?
- Did I respect other people's opinions even though they were different from mine?

Once the discussion of the learner's answers to these questions has begun, the learner is given feedback, and further follow-up probing questions are asked either by the teacher or by the peer (according to the instructions that have been given by the teacher).

An example from Norway

The circle-dialogue assessment method, in which learners engage in a discussion in small groups, is regularly used in Norway. The method is used for assessment

for formative purposes as well as for enhancing learners' competences, and the method may be used in any school subject. It is typically used from school years 2 and 3 until the final year of upper secondary school when learners are 18-19 years old. There is a risk that some learners might regard the assessment as not being "real" assessment because their core academic knowledge and competences are not being evaluated and graded, with the result that they put little effort into their performance. To minimise this risk, the circle method may be administered in advance of a summative assessment, where learners' need for self-efficacy is more at stake. The aim is to encourage learners to be aware of the richness of academic dialogue for their own learning processes.

Learners need to feel safe to express their views and to reflect openly in the group discussion, and they need to be assured that the feedback from the teacher and their peers will be constructive and fruitful for their own learning processes. Learners are told that they will be given the opportunity to reflect on their own performance after the circle work, which will be monitored either by the teacher or by the whole group. In addition, learners need to know in advance what academic knowledge and which competences will be expected from them. This method is therefore most suitable for use towards the end of a working period when the learners have already acquired the relevant knowledge.

To administer the method, the learners are organised into groups of five or six. It is helpful to place learners who have different levels of ability into the same group, as this helps to train learners' co-operation skills. Weaker learners may be given a short preparation to help the teacher work out which other members of the class will be most suitable for inclusion in their group and to ascertain what kind of feedback they will find most constructive after the assessment has been conducted. The learners sit in a circle together with the teacher.

An envelope containing several open-ended questions or debatable statements is placed in the middle of the circle. These questions should require reflection, be able to promote discussion, and be open to a variety of different reasoned answers. For example, in history, such questions for ninth graders might be: "Why was Europe at war from 1939 to 1945?" or "Would there have been a Second World War if not for Adolf Hitler?". The questions mirror the most important topics and discussions from the immediately preceding period of work, and should be relevant for the summative assessment that will take place afterwards. One of the learners is asked to randomly pick one of the questions or statements and read it out to the others. The following stages then take place.

First, the learner who reads the question asks the rest of the group: "What do we know about this topic?". The learners give their answers one by one, and the teacher or one of the learners writes all the information on stickers. The stickers are placed so that all participants can see and read the information. This first stage aims to build a knowledge base for the whole group.

The second stage involves the learners discussing what information might be most useful for answering the question or for finding arguments to support or contest the statement. All of the learners have to give at least one reason for their opinion about the information that can help them during the discussion. Some of the information stickers that are deemed to be irrelevant can then be removed from the knowledge base.

The third stage involves each learner answering the question, and every learner should have a turn at providing an answer. All answers have to be reasoned, and they have to include a comment on how the answer relates to earlier answers. For example: "I think… because…", "I do agree with you, because…" or "I am of another opinion because…". During this stage, the teacher ensures that everybody listens and makes up their own mind, and the learners have to negotiate to identify the answers and the reasons that they find most convincing.

After this first round of reasoning, the learners are then informed by the teacher that there is the opportunity for them to change their answer, as long as they can explain why they wish to change it. They can build their argument on the earlier statements made by other learners. When all of the learners have settled on their answer to the main question, the teacher sums up the answers and the reasoning.

A final discussion focused on the learners' self-assessments is then initiated by the teacher. All of the learners have to express what they have learned, how they see their own contributions to the dialogue, and how they could do better in the future. The RFCDC descriptors may be used by the learners to self-assess their own contributions. Learners are given feedback on their self-assessments, and further probing questions are asked either by the teacher or by peers (according to the instructions that have been given by the teacher). Through the use of sensitive dialogue and probing questions, the teacher supports and scaffolds the learners' reflections and self-assessments, creating a fruitful, rich and appropriate discussion.

2. Activity-based self-assessment

General characterisation and description of the method

This method requires the learner to reflect on and assess his or her own proficiency in the use of one or more competences. The learner then has to record the results of these self-assessments. The reflection process is supported by, or revolves around, an explicit activity that is given to the learner. The activity is designed to assist the learner in their self-reflections and self-assessment, and it usually also supports the learner in achieving higher levels of proficiency in one or more competences. Thus, this method is not only a method of assessment – it also serves a pedagogical function.

The lists of RFCDC descriptors (or selected subsets of the descriptors) are usually given to the learner to work with in their self-assessment, so that they can see what the expectations are and can assess themselves against these expectations. This helps to raise their awareness of the learning outcomes they have attained already and of the learning outcomes that they should be attempting to attain. Consequently, when used appropriately and effectively, this method also contributes to the learner's autonomy in learning. Because it is learner-centred and encouraging for the learner, the method helps to promote the learner's engagement and active participation.

A particular strength of the method is that it is highly flexible and can be easily adapted for use in a wide variety of different learning situations. In addition, very few resources are required to use it, making it a very practical method to use in the classroom.

The assessment outcomes that the method yields can be used either as standalone assessments or they can be incorporated into a larger reflective journal, project report or portfolio. For the teacher, the method yields information about the progress that is being made by the learner, and it can also be used to reveal difficulties that the learner might be having. In addition, the method can assist teachers in reflecting on the methodologies that they are using.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

Due to the reading, writing and self-reflection demands that are made by this method, it is most suited to learners aged 12 years and older.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

Assessments are made by the learner, ideally in a moderated learning environment.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

The method is suited to conducting assessments for low-stakes formative, diagnostic and monitoring purposes. It can also be used for summative purposes as long as these are low-stakes purposes only.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method

Values

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

Attitudes

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

Competence

Skills

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

Knowledge and critical understanding

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

Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

Reliability is likely to be medium rather than high, because the outcomes will be dependent on the ability of the learner to make judgments of proficiency and the method requires a degree of self-awareness by the learner.

Validity

The reliability of this method compromises its validity as an assessment of the learner's actual proficiency in using competences. For this reason, it should not be used for high-stakes purposes. However, the information that the method yields about the learner's perception of their own learning and proficiency is nevertheless extremely useful for teachers who wish to encourage and promote the learner's competences further.

Equity

Equity is high, because all learners are able to use the method, there are few barriers to learners' use of it, and it is not a competitive form of assessment.

Respectfulness

The method is high in respectfulness due to the learner's control over the outcomes, the fact that the learner is free to decide how much to reveal about themselves, and the fact that their own voice prevails in the assessment.

Transparency

The method is highly transparent, because the provision of descriptors for the learner to work with means that he or she has direct access to the expected learning outcomes.

Practicality

The method is high in practicality, because it is easy to administer at low cost within a short time frame.

Concrete examples of how the method is currently used

An example from Ireland

The student self-assessment tool that is reproduced below is used by the WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS) programme, which currently works with over half the schools in Ireland to integrate Global Citizenship Education/Development Education into all aspects of teaching and learning at post-primary level. The tool is used by learners twice: before and after they have participated in a global justice project, class or activity within their school. The tool reveals to learners how they have changed as a result of participating in the project.

Participating schools may opt to use the tool, and they are obliged to use it as part of the reporting mechanism if they are in receipt of grants from WWGS or when they put themselves forward for the WWGS Global Passport award. Full details of the programme can be found at the following link: www.worldwiseschools.ie/. In addition, the WWGS have a very useful teacher guide: www.worldwiseschools.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GCE-How-to-guidebook-web.pdf.

The components of WWGS Global Citizenship Education/Development Education are Knowledge, Skills, Values, Attitudes, Methodologies and Taking Meaningful Action. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes correspond to many of the competences in the RFCDC. However, the tool can be made even more compatible with the RFCDC by using the RFCDC descriptors to construct the statements that appear in the central column of the tables that comprise the tool. In addition, the descriptors for "Flexibility and adaptability" may be used by learners to self-assess their ability to use their competences in a flexible and adaptive manner (e.g. I can adjust my way of working when this is necessary [basic level]; I can adapt effectively to change [intermediate level]). Separate tables may be constructed for values and attitudes, rather than combining them in a single table. In addition, it is possible to add an extra column to each table on the right, to be used when the learner completes the After Score, in which the learner has to provide an example of how they actually used that particular descriptor in the context of the project/activity. In principle, all 20 RFCDC competences can be self-assessed through the use of the method, if the relevant descriptors are used in the self-assessment tables. The competences and the descriptors that are used should be relevant and appropriate for the particular project or activity in which the learner has engaged. However, it is advisable not to overload the learner with too many competences at one time.

WORLDWISE GLOBAL SCHOOLS SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL (SAT)

STUDENT FORM (2018/19)

This activity is undertaken before and after you have completed a global justice project/class/ activity within your school. It aims to find out if there has been a change in your knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions as a result of taking part.

Name: _____

School name: _____

Date: _____

Instructions:

1. *Before the project:* Think about what you know about the statements in each of the boxes below. Score each of the statements on a **scale between** 0-5 depending on how much you agree with it ***(0 = I totally disagree and 5 = I totally agree)***
2. *After the project*: Score your agreement now on the same statements.
3. Add up your scores in the "before" and "after" columns at the bottom.

Before Score	KNOWLEDGE	After Score
	I am aware that we live in a fast changing unequal world	
	I am aware of the major environmental and justice issues in our world	
	I understand that people in the world are all connected and dependent on each other (trade, food, work, socially, environmentally, etc.)	
	I am aware of the changes we need to make in our lives in order to make the world fairer and more sustainable for all	
	I am aware of the root causes of why the world is unequal – the history and forces that have made it so	
	ADD UP YOUR BEFORE AND AFTER SCORES	

Before Score	SKILLS	After Score
	I can share my opinions and debate with my classmates on global issues in a respectful way	
	I am confident sharing my learning about global justice issues with my peers and am open to learning from them	
	I can search for and identify trustworthy information on global justice issues by myself	
	I can consider different actions that can be taken on global justice issues and evaluate which one will create real change	
	I can confidently work as part of a team to take an action on a global justice issue	
	ADD UP YOUR BEFORE AND AFTER SCORES	

Before Score	ATTITUDES & VALUES	After Score
	I think it is important to learn about global justice issues in the world	
	I believe that the needs and rights of others (in Ireland and around the world) are equal to my own	
	I think it is a good thing to have a mix of different values, beliefs and traditions in the communities and culture where I live	
	I feel solidarity with people who are being treated unfairly in the world (I don't just feel sorry for them or grateful for my own life, I stand with them for change)	
	I feel I am an active global citizen (know my rights and responsibilities, and can take action to make the world a better place)	
	ADD UP YOUR BEFORE AND AFTER SCORES	

Before Score	ACTION	After Score
	I question and challenge stereotypes (my own and others)	
	I think about and change the way I live (i.e. the things I buy, use, eat) so that people and the planet are not negatively affected by my choices	
	I have developed a project from idea to action that addresses a global justice issue (by myself or with others)	
	I participate in global justice campaigns/ projects within my school or outside my school	
	I actively try to inspire and engage others to learn about and take action on global justice issues	
	ADD UP YOUR BEFORE AND AFTER SCORES	

What did you *learn* most from participating in this Global Justice project/activity/class?	**Have any of your *attitudes/opinions changed* as a result of participating? If so, *how*?**
What *actions, if any, will you take as a result* of what you have learned?	**What *recommendations* do you have for how this project/activity/class *could be improved* to help you learn more?**

An example from Germany

This method is adapted from "My backpack for learning", an activity published in Mompoint-Gaillard P. and Lázár I. (eds) (2015), *TASKs for Democracy*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

The procedure starts with the learner reading a list of the 20 RFCDC competences, and choosing one of them in which he or she is particularly interested. The name of this competence is then written down at the top of Picture 1. Using a coloured pen or marker, the learner then has to write in the bubble five things that they do which reflect their use of this competence in their behaviour. They should aim to identify the most advanced things that they can do when they use the competence.

The next step is for them to read the descriptors that are provided for the competence in the RFCDC. They should select a few more things that they do when they use the competence but had not thought of themselves. These should be added to Picture 1 using a different colour pen or marker.

They should then complete Picture 2 by writing in the bubbles what they would like to be able to do by using the competence that they have been working on, in two or three months' time (the teacher may set whatever time period they think is most appropriate for them to use here). The learner can use the RFCDC descriptors to help them with this task. The learner should then answer the following questions:

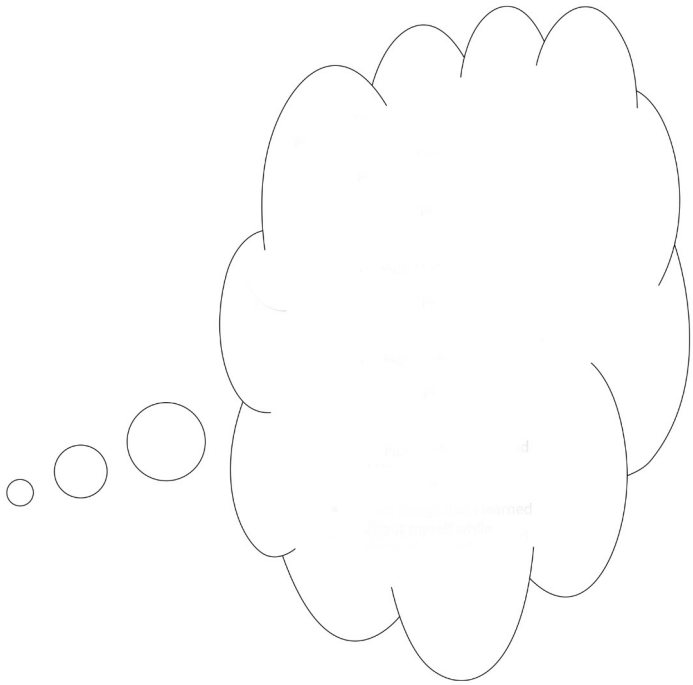
1. How does being the person in Picture 2 affect my choices? My life? Other people's lives? My environment?
2. How will I bridge Pictures 1 and 2?
3. What actions can I take to develop towards Picture 2? Think of as many actions as possible, and do not forget that smaller as well as larger actions can be used.
4. What challenges do I expect to encounter? What are my strengths that I can draw on to face these challenges?
5. In order to become the person in Picture 2, are there other competences that I will also need to develop?

The next step is for the learner to choose up to seven actions they need to undertake in order to bridge Pictures 1 and 2, and add them to the spider web shown in Picture 3. As the learner feels that they are making progress towards Picture 2, they can then colour the web between the threads accordingly and jot down notes as to what progress they have made and why they are adding the colour.

After completing the activity, the learner should reflect on what they have learned while doing it. Some questions they could answer are:

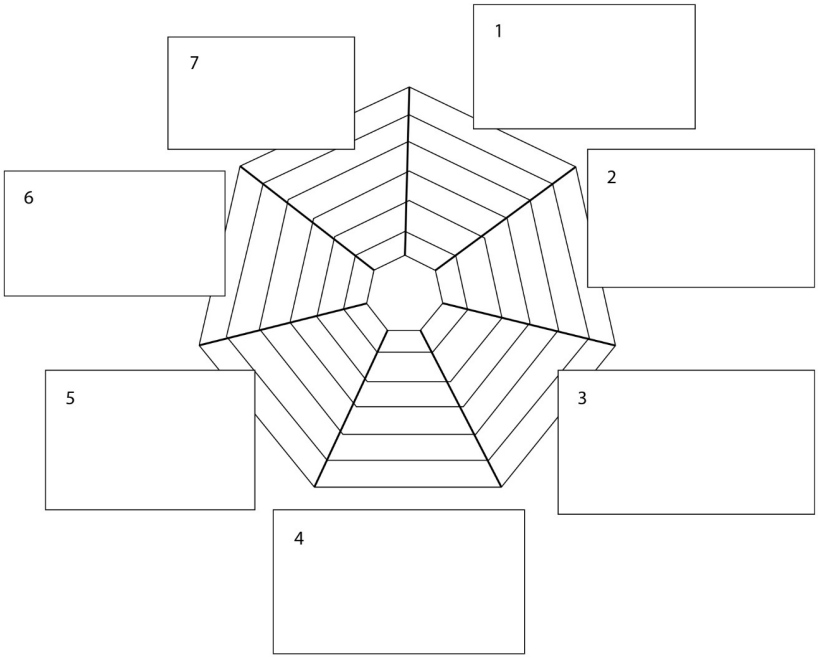
- Why did you choose this particular competence to work on?
- Why did you choose these specific elements in Picture 2?
- Think of two things that you learned about yourself while doing this activity.

Picture 1



Picture 2

Picture 3



3. Observational assessment

General characterisation and description of the method

There are two main types of observational assessment, incidental and planned. Incidental observational assessment occurs when the teacher happens to observe that an individual learner has attained a particular learning outcome during the process of teaching and learning. This type of assessment can be very useful for formative purposes. By contrast, planned observation is intentionally planned by the teacher in order to establish whether the learner has attained a set of specific learning outcomes, and can be used for formative, diagnostic, monitoring or summative purposes. Planned observation often involves setting the learner a particular task or activity that is expected to enable the learner to demonstrate mastery of one or more competences – the observations are then made of the learner working on or performing that task or activity.

In both incidental and planned observation, a record needs to be made of the attainment of the learning outcome(s). This may take the form of a direct record such as an audio or video recording or a series of photographs of the learner engaged in activities. Alternatively, it may take the form of a written record such as an observation sheet or a logbook in which a verbal description of what has been observed is written by the assessor.

Written records can be highly structured; for example, they can contain rubrics, against which comments on the learner's performance vis-à-vis the various learning

outcomes are written directly. Another possibility is for the sheets to be open-ended, perhaps listing some of the behaviours that the assessor should be looking out for, and providing plenty of space for the assessor to write down a narrative description of the learner's performance. All written records should be made either as the behaviours are taking place and are being observed, or immediately after the observations have been made, in order to prevent details from being forgotten.

If a rubric sheet is used to record observations, then interpretations and judgments need to be made at the same time as the observations are being made. However, if an open-ended description of the learner's performance is being written, then this description can be relatively neutral and avoid making judgments about the extent to which particular learning outcomes have been exhibited. This allows for the interpretation and the judgment about the learner's performance to be made at a later point in time based on the written description. If any artefacts are produced during the course of the task or activity (e.g. worksheets, a piece of writing, a drawing), they can also be used as additional evidence for making judgments about the learner's levels of proficiency.

When conducting a planned observational assessment, it is important that the teacher or other assessor anticipates the types of learning outcomes that may be displayed by the learner. The RFCDC descriptors can be used to identify appropriate learning outcomes and to construct rubrics for assessing performance on a specific task or activity (see the Appendix at the end of this book for guidance on how to do this). In the case of an incidental observational assessment, precisely because it is unplanned, learning outcomes cannot be prepared in advance. In this case, an open-ended non-judgmental written description of the learner's performance could be recorded, which can then be cross-checked against the learning outcomes (i.e. the descriptors) at a later point in time.

Rubrics have the advantages of improving the reliability of the assessor's judgments and enhancing the transparency of the assessment for learners. This transparency in turn can help to overcome the potential threat to the validity of the assessment that is posed when learners simply fail to produce the behaviours required for the assessment, even though they are capable of producing them, because they mistakenly believe that other behaviours are required instead.

Another potential vulnerability of observational assessment is that it can be affected by the preconceptions and expectations of the assessor, which can lead to selective perception and inappropriate conclusions being drawn about the learner. Furthermore, because it is impossible to capture all details of a person's behaviour, all observations and written records of observations are inherently selective in the information that they capture. Lapses of attention can therefore easily lead to key behaviours being missed. These potential threats to the reliability of the method can be minimised by using more than a single teacher or assessor to make the observations.

A potentially serious problem affecting the validity of observational assessment arises when learners experience a high level of anxiety or self-consciousness because they know that they are being observed for assessment purposes. Such anxiety can interfere with their performance to such an extent that it undermines the validity of the method. In such cases, it is extremely important that the teacher puts the learner at ease in an appropriate manner before the observations commence.

Depending on the nature of the specific task or activity that is set for the learner, observational assessment can be used to assess the proficiency of the learner in subsets of competences that are drawn from the full range of the 20 competences specified by the RFCDC.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

Learners of all ages can be assessed using observational assessment, as long as they are observed engaged in age-appropriate activities and tasks that require them to apply their competences.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

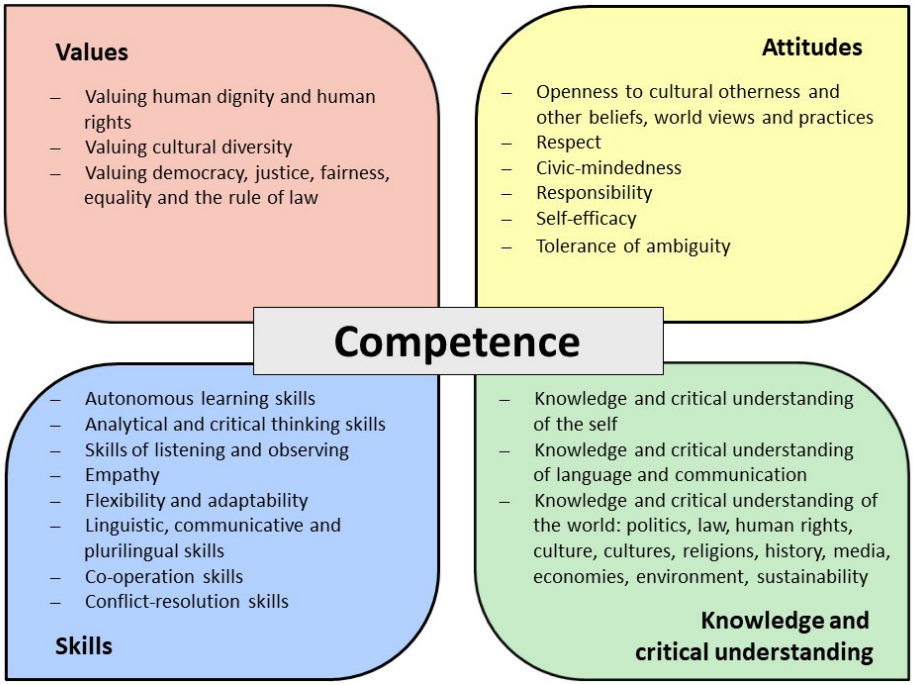
The teacher is the optimal person to conduct observational assessments. If the method is used for summative purposes, it is beneficial if a second teacher also independently conducts the observations of the learner, so that the two sets of records can be compared and discussed afterwards, to ensure reliability.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

This method can be used for all four purposes: formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative. However, given the difficulties associated with both reliability and validity, the method is much better suited to low-stakes rather than high-stakes purposes.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

Reliability can be high, but this depends on the training and experience of the teacher or other assessor who is conducting the observations. Reliability can be enhanced by using rubrics, and by having the observations made by two teachers working independently of each other and then comparing and discussing their records afterwards.

Validity

As long as reliability is high, validity can also be high. However, in addition, validity requires that learners who are able to engage in the relevant behaviours do not fail to produce those behaviours because they mistakenly believe that other behaviours are required instead. This means that transparency also needs to be high. The other major threat to the validity of observational assessment is learners' anxiety or self-consciousness, both of which can arise from the learner knowing that he or she is being observed – this means that the learner needs to be put at ease in an appropriate manner before observations commence.

Equity

Equity requires that there are no subgroups of learners who will be disproportionately affected by the use of the method. If there are some learners within the group whose performance is likely to be unduly affected by either anxiety or self-consciousness, and if these learners are not put at their ease in an appropriate manner before the observations begin, equity may be low. In addition, precautions need to be taken to ensure that the tasks or activities that are set for learners are not stereotyping of or disparaging towards others, and are suitable given learners' cultural backgrounds.

Respectfulness

As long as the precautions concerning reliability, validity and equity are taken, and as long as the dignity of the learner is not undermined in any way by the task or activity or by the observational process, this method is high in respectfulness.

Transparency

The method can be high in transparency if the purpose and method of the observations are explained clearly to learners in advance, and if learners are given the rubrics in advance of the observations being made.

Practicality

Incidental observational assessment is highly practical for use within the classroom and is easy to conduct – indeed, it is arguable that it is an intrinsic component of good pedagogy. Planned observation is more time-consuming to prepare and conduct, especially if two or more teachers are involved.

Concrete example of how the method is currently used

An example from North Macedonia

Observational assessment is widely used in North Macedonia, where it forms a core component of Lesson Study. Lesson Study depends crucially on the observational assessment of learners; however, the goal is to use the assessment outcomes to promote teacher proficiency (rather than learner proficiency). Lesson Study is used more widely in primary than secondary schools, although efforts are being made to increase its use in secondary schools, due to the perceived benefits of the approach.

Lesson Study is a structured process where teachers work together to formulate solutions to challenges they encounter in relation to teaching and learning, and it aims to improve teaching and learning by developing successful approaches. The major characteristics of Lesson Study are: the collaborative planning of a lesson, teaching the lesson, using observational assessment during the lesson in order to collect data from learners, and reflecting on what has been learned in order to inform the design of future lessons.

The process requires teachers to work in small groups to plan a lesson that addresses a shared teaching and learning goal. These groups consist of three teachers from the same school, one of whom is selected on the basis of being the "expert teacher". Together, the group explores what they want the learners to learn through the lesson, the competences that they want learners to develop, and the learning outcomes that they want learners to achieve. They examine and analyse the various methods and materials they might use in order to achieve these goals, and debate the merits of various approaches, before identifying the best methods and materials to use. They then plan a lesson to bring their goals for learning and development to life.

In addition to planning the lesson, the teachers also examine in advance the observational evidence that needs to be collected during the lesson. They identify how they will conduct the observations, and how they will record the learners' performance. In particular, they:

- examine their expectations of how learners will respond to the lesson;
- identify the types of learner behaviours that the observers will focus on when making their observations;
- decide how they will capture evidence of the achievement of the learning outcomes by the learners, and establish the observational strategies that will be used for this purpose;
- decide how the observational evidence will be recorded (e.g. whether using rubric sheets or open-ended field notes);
- identify any additional types of evidence that will be collected (e.g. learners' written work that is completed as part of the lesson).

The team then prepares a set of observation guidelines, which are used by the two members of the team who will work as the observers.

On the day of the lesson, the observers are introduced to the class, and the learners are told what they will be doing. The learners have the opportunity to ask questions about the process before the lesson begins. One team member then teaches

the team's lesson, while the other two team members carefully observe individual learners. Most commonly, the observations are made of just three learners, seeking to understand the lesson from their points of view.

The evidence from the observations is used to establish a picture of what worked and what did not work in terms of the achievement of the learning outcomes by those three learners. After the lesson, the team members share their observations, and draw out the implications for the content of the lesson and for their vision of learner development. They examine the trends and patterns in the evidence; what the evidence suggests about the learners' thinking, misconceptions, difficulties, insights, surprising ideas, etc.; how and why the learners achieved or did not achieve the learning goals; and the ways in which the lesson could be revised and improved.

Lesson Study is an inquiry cycle that supports teachers to experiment, observe and improve their practices. The real product of a Lesson Study cycle is much more than just one polished lesson. As the team collaborates to improve instruction, they deepen their knowledge of content and learner thinking, as well as their commitment to working together to improve instruction. As the teachers work together to study the learning process, schools become places where both learners and teachers become passionate about learning.

Notable features of this application of the observational method are: (i) the detailed planning that goes into deciding how the observational evidence will be collected and recorded; (ii) the explanation that is given to the learners about what is going to happen during the class and the opportunity for them to ask questions before the lesson begins; (iii) the use of two observers to make the observations; and (iv) the sharing and comparing of the observations after the lesson has taken place. All of these features can play a very useful role when observational assessments are used to assess learners' levels of proficiency.

Further information about the Lesson Study method is available from: www.uwlax.edu/sotl/lsp/guide/.

4. Oral presentations

General characterisation and description of the method

This method involves the learner giving an oral presentation, either to the whole class or to a smaller subgroup of peers. Both the content of the presentation and the quality of its delivery can be assessed, and the assessment can be made by the teacher, by peers or by the learner, or indeed by all three. In addition, the learner may be asked questions about their presentation after it has been given, either by their peers or by the teacher. This enables those conducting the assessment to ask probing questions to explore the competences of the learner in greater depth. If the learner is asked questions following their presentation, the practices described earlier in connection with dialogue-based assessment should be used. For example, questions should be expressed in appropriate language that the learner can easily understand; the wording of questions should be adjusted in a sensitive manner according to the needs of the learner; and the questions that are asked may be sequenced to channel the learner's reflections. An alternative way in which an oral presentation

can be used for assessment is for the learner to produce a written reflection on, and a self-assessment of, their own presentation after it has been made.

The learning outcomes that are being assessed, and the expectations about the learner's performance, should be clearly explained to the learner in advance of their preparation for the presentation, to ensure transparency in the assessment. Providing the learner with a rubric that describes the standards that are expected of the learner and the criteria that are going to be used to assess his or her performance is of considerable benefit. Such a rubric can then also be used by the assessors, to enhance the reliability of the assessment process.

A potential weakness of this method is that it can be stressful for learners. Some learners can become very anxious when they have to give an oral presentation, and this anxiety can interfere with their performance to such an extent that it undermines the validity of the method. This problem can be mitigated for most learners in two main ways. First, the teacher should clearly explain to the learner the requirements of the presentation and how the assessment is going to be made, to minimise their uncertainty about these matters. Second, the learner should have ample time to prepare, rehearse and practise their presentation, and to receive informal feedback on the presentation from others which they can then use to modify the presentation before they have to give it for assessment purposes.

This method is not suitable for assessing values and attitudes, due to the fact that it is possible for learners to express values and attitudes in an oral presentation which they do not hold, simply because they know these are the values and attitudes that the assessor expects or wants to see expressed. By contrast, knowledge, understanding and skills cannot be fabricated in the same way if the learner has not mastered them. For this reason, oral presentations can be used to assess several skills as well as knowledge and critical understanding.

If the method requires the learner to conduct research in advance of making the presentation, it can serve a pedagogical function as well as an assessment function, fostering the learner's autonomous learning skills and knowledge and critical understanding of the topic of the presentation. Furthermore, depending on the topic of the presentation, the method can also be used to foster the learner's reflective skills – hence, by setting suitable topics, the teacher can actively promote learner reflection.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

Due to the demands that the method places on the learner, it is most suitable for learners in secondary and higher education, aged 11 years or older.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

The method can be used for assessment by teachers and peers, as well as for self-assessment.

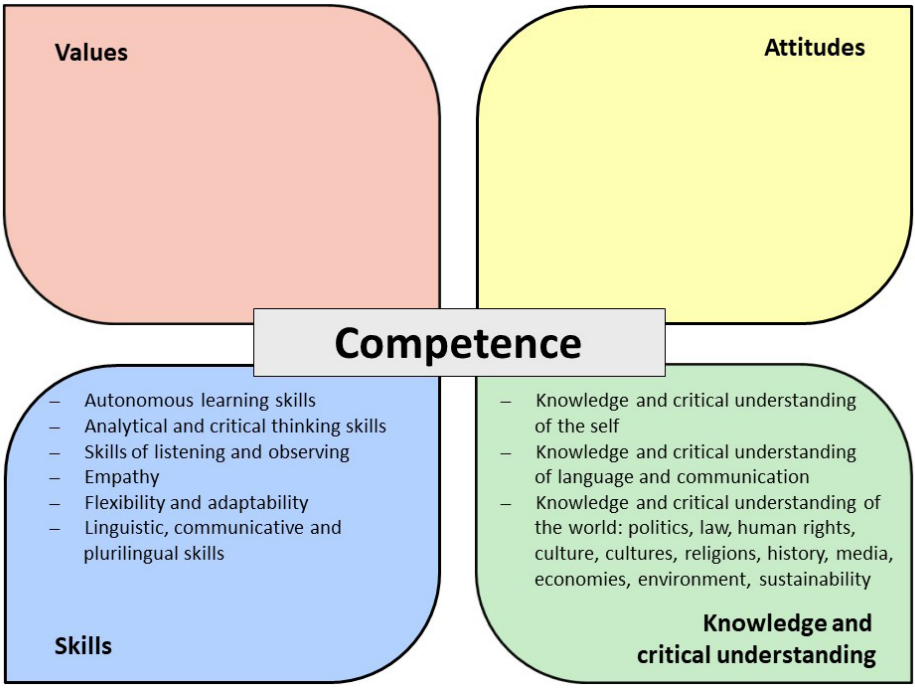
The educational purposes for which the method can be used

The method is most suitable for use for low-stakes formative and monitoring purposes. Due to the possibility of learner anxiety interfering with the validity of the method,

it should not be used for high-stakes assessments. The problem of anxiety should also be borne in mind if the method is used for summative purposes.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

Nine of the 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

If the assessments are conducted by a trained teacher who is experienced in the use of the method, the reliability of this method can be high. Reliability is likely to be lower when assessments are conducted by the learner him- or herself, and is likely to be lowest when assessments are conducted by peers. However, if the teacher moderates the outcomes of self- and peer assessments, reliability can be improved. A rubric should ideally be used to enhance reliability.

Validity

The validity of this method can be high if suitable precautions to ensure high reliability are used and if suitable precautions are taken to minimise the anxiety of the learner and to support them through the assessment process. However, validity can be severely compromised if the learner is excessively anxious, or if they have poor oral communication skills.

Equity

Equity requires that there are no subgroups of learners who will be disproportionately affected by the use of the method. This means that if there are some learners within the group whose performance is likely to be unduly affected by anxiety, and if suitable steps are not taken to alleviate their anxiety, equity may be low. In addition, suitable precautions need to be taken to ensure that there are no subgroups of learners who might be negatively affected by the specific topics that are set for their presentations. This requires attention to be paid to the learners' cultural backgrounds in setting topics. Any topics that might be construed as being stereotyping of or disparaging towards others should be avoided. Finally, equity might also be compromised if the language in which the presentation has to be made is not the learner's first language.

Respectfulness

As long as the precautions concerning reliability, validity and equity are taken, and as long as any questioning of the learner that takes place after the presentation has been made is conducted in a respectful manner, this method is high in respectfulness.

Transparency

The method can be high in transparency if learners are given the rubrics or are informed about the expected learning outcomes in advance and if they are given ample support in how to prepare their presentations.

Practicality

The method is practical for use within the classroom because it is easy to administer at low cost and does not require the use of special resources. However, preparing learners to give presentations can be demanding on the teacher's time.

Concrete example of how the method is currently used

An example from Azerbaijan

"Life skills" is an integrative subject that is taught in secondary schools in Azerbaijan. It helps learners to build their knowledge, skills and values for their own personal development. The content of the subject gives them the opportunity to work with many of the competences that are specified by the RFCDC. The topics covered include civil society, democratic principles in civil society, intercultural tolerance, human rights and interpersonal relationships. Learners are assessed in the subject through both written and oral presentations.

The oral presentations given by the learners are based on what they are learning in classes and on their own independent research. Learners have to construct their presentations mainly around the following questions:

- Why is this necessary?
- Who benefits from this?
- What alternative ways are there?

- What are the differences between these?
- Why is this one better than the other?

The presentation gives learners the opportunity to express their views on the issues being discussed, and to justify their own personal position. They are expected to analyse data and approach information using critical thinking and a civil position, and they have to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding that they have acquired both inside and outside the classroom. The time allowed for the presentation is the same for all learners.

Rubrics are used by the teacher to assess the learners' presentations. The rubrics are grouped into several dimensions. In particular, the learner has to justify his or her opinions with arguments and has to display critical thinking towards the issues involved. Learners are familiar with the criteria and are given the rubric in advance of making their presentations.

5. Debate-based assessment

General characterisation and description of the method

Asking learners to debate an issue is a very useful method for assessing their linguistic and communicative skills and their analytical and critical thinking skills in particular. However, debate-based assessment can also be used to assess all of the other competences specified by the RFCDC, depending on the specific topic that is set for the debate and the manner in which the debate is set up.

Debates may employ a formal or informal structure. In a formal debate, a motion for debate is selected – this is a statement that can be either supported or opposed depending on the arguments that are used. The learners who are to be assessed are put into two debating teams, one of which has to argue in support of the motion, while the other argues against it. It is common for two teams containing three learners each to be used, with the rest of the class forming the audience. Each member of the two teams takes it in turn to support or oppose the motion, alternating until all of the speakers have had their say. A final summing up may also be performed by the first speaker in each team.

Before the debate takes place, the two teams of learners need to be given plenty of time to prepare their arguments in support of or against the motion, and this can involve them conducting substantial research into the issues being debated. Learners may self-select which side of the debate they wish to argue for. Alternatively, they may be encouraged or even required to argue for the point of view that is opposite to the one that they themselves hold, in order to make them examine and question their own assumptions, preconceptions, perspectives and biases.

If this latter strategy is employed, the method can only be used to assess learners' skills, knowledge and critical understanding, not their values or attitudes (because they will be arguing in opposition to their own values and attitudes). However, if learners are allowed to self-select the side of the debate for which they wish to argue, values and attitudes can also be assessed, depending on the specific motion that is being debated.

In practice, it is most feasible to focus the assessment on only those particular competences that are most relevant to the topic of the debate (plus linguistic and communicative skills and analytical and critical thinking skills). The assessment of learners' performance in a formal debate can be made through the use of a rubric that has been constructed from the RFCDC descriptors (see the Appendix at the end of this book for guidance on how to construct a rubric from the descriptors). In addition, if the rest of the class has observed the debate as an audience, they can be asked to vote for the team that they think has won the debate (although the outcome of this vote would not normally form part of the formal assessment). Peers may also conduct assessments of the speakers' performance using the rubric, if this is judged to be suitable. In addition, self-assessments using the rubric can be made by the speakers themselves after the debate.

As an alternative to this highly structured form of debate, debate-based assessment can be used in a much more informal manner within the classroom. Learners can be asked to conduct research into a statement. Subsequently, the whole class can be organised into teams on the basis of their overall stance in relationship to the statement. Depending on the number of perspectives, the class may be divided into two or more teams, and the class as a whole can then debate the issue, with each individual learner having the opportunity to express his or her own point of view. After the debate, learners can make self-assessments, using a rubric to guide their judgments.

Another possibility is for the debate to take place online over an extended period of time. The advantage of this method is that it reduces the need for rapid thinking and verbal dexterity, and instead allows more time for ongoing research and critical reflection on the points that have been made by an opposing individual or team before replying. Again, the assessment can be conducted through the use of a rubric, either by the learners themselves or by the teacher.

Because there is the potential for debates, as they proceed, to degenerate in their levels of courtesy and politeness, due to the emotions that can be aroused in the participants, the ground rules for conducting debates should always be discussed and clearly established with learners prior to the debate taking place. These ground rules should always include respect for the dignity of others irrespective of the particular positions for which they might be arguing.

The topic of the debate can be chosen for its relevance to the learners themselves. Indeed, learners may help to choose the topic that is to be debated. In addition, with older learners, it is possible for them to participate in the construction of the rubrics that are going to be used to assess their performance. This can help to ensure not only the transparency of the assessment method but also that the method is learner-centred.

Because debate-based assessment, when conducted either by the teacher or by peers, relies on drawing conclusions from observations of the learner engaged in an activity (i.e. a debate), all of the limitations concerning reliability, validity and equity that were discussed in connection with observational assessment and oral presentations also apply to this method. For this reason, debate-based assessment is much better suited to low-stakes assessment purposes than to high-stakes purposes.

When the preparation for a debate requires learners to engage in research on the issues that are going to be debated, the method serves not only an assessment function but also a pedagogical function, and it can be used to promote learners' autonomous learning skills and their knowledge and critical understanding of the topic of the debate. The method can also promote learner reflection, through learners' need to identify how they are going to present their arguments to the audience in the debate. The feedback that they receive from their peers can also help to foster reflection further.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

This method is most suitable for learners in secondary and higher education, aged 11 years or older.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

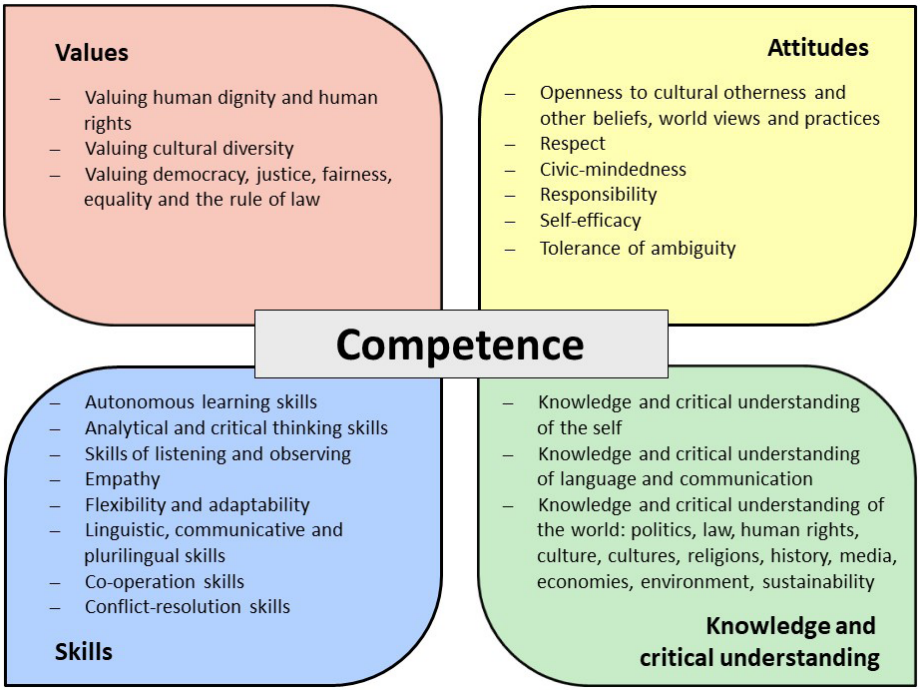
Assessments can be made by teachers or peers, and self-assessment is also possible.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

The method can be used for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes. However, due to the potential problems with reliability, validity and equity, the method is only suitable for low-stakes assessment purposes.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

The reliability of teacher assessment is likely to depend on the training and experience of the teacher. If the assessment is made by the learner or by peers, reliability is likely to be lower. However, reliability can be enhanced by using rubrics, irrespective of whether the assessment is made by the teacher, the learner or peers.

Validity

As long as reliability is high, then validity can also be high. However, validity can be undermined if the learner has poor linguistic and communicative skills or is prone to anxiety when asked to perform in front of an audience of peers. Other aspects of personality may also undermine validity (e.g. if the learner is unassertive or lacks confidence in expressing his or her arguments).

Equity

Equity may be undermined if there are subgroups of learners within the class who are especially anxious, unassertive or lacking in confidence. In addition, precautions need to be taken to ensure that the motions or statements that are chosen for debate are not stereotyping of or disparaging towards others, and are suitable given learners' cultural backgrounds. Finally, equity may be compromised if a learner has a language other than the language in which the debate is being conducted as his or her first language.

Respectfulness

As long as the precautions concerning reliability, validity and equity are taken, and as long as ground rules for conducting the debate are established (including respect for the dignity of others), respectfulness should be high.

Transparency

The method can be high in transparency if the purpose of the debate is explained clearly to learners in advance, and if learners are given the rubric in advance of the debate taking place.

Practicality

Debate-based assessment is highly practical, and does not require any special resources.

Concrete example of how the method is currently used

An example from Cyprus

Assessment through debate is employed in various educational contexts in both secondary and higher education in Cyprus. It can be used in many subjects,

including language, religious education, social and political education, health education, science education, geography, English and history. The focus in the example given here is on religious education and science education (based on an interdisciplinary approach), using controversial socio-scientific issues (SSIs) that have ethical considerations.

SSIs are open-ended, ill-structured problems, typically contentious, and subject to multiple perspectives and solutions. Engaging with SSIs is complex and difficult, as it involves forming opinions, making decisions at a personal or societal level, the critical analysis of media reports, the evaluation of claims, a consideration of values, and ethical and moral reasoning. SSIs may also require some understanding of probability and risk.

Debate-based assessment enables learners to make or to develop informed decisions regarding SSIs with ethical considerations, fostering their moral reasoning abilities through reflection, the construction of different types of arguments, participation in open-ended discussions of moral issues, and participation in debates.

For example, in biology, in secondary education for 18-year-old learners, the learners may be given the following scenario, which concerns what a couple should do if their child has a hereditary illness:

> Nasia and Apostole are a couple. Nasia is pregnant and visits the physician for a check-up. Nasia and Apostole tell the physician that both of them are beta thalassaemia carriers (a hereditary illness). The physician tells them that their child has a 25% risk of having beta thalassemia with many health problems and dependence on blood transfusions. The only way to find out whether their child will have beta thalassaemia is by means of an amniocentesis. Their dilemma is the following: What do they do if their child has the disease?

The learners first have to come to a well-grounded decision about the moral issues that are involved. They need to be able to recognise and extract a moral question from the dilemma at hand; they have to become aware of the arguments and values that they and others might use; they have to think through the consequences of their decision; they should be able to find and use the information needed to guide this process; and, finally, they should be aware of the necessary steps to arrive at a well-grounded decision.

The learners are then assessed through their participation in a group debate, focusing on their co-operation skills, the quality of their arguments, and their argumentation skills. The criteria for their assessment are developed with the learners' participation. The types of possible assessment criteria might include, for example, all of the following.

- Looks for information from a variety of sources.
- Evaluates information.
- Constructs different types of valid arguments.
- Recognises and responds to others speaking.
- Able to recognise and use appropriate non-verbal communication cues.

- Shares freely and explains with details.
- Supports and leads others in discussion.
- Gives feedback on the quality of arguments.
- Works well with others.
- Assumes a clear role and related responsibilities.
- Presents valid arguments and counterarguments in a logical, interesting way which the audience can follow.
- Covers topic completely and in depth.
- Uses critical thinking, different types of valid arguments, various sources and evidence.
- Communicates ideas with enthusiasm.
- Uses voice properly.
- Has good linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills.
- Maintains eye contact with audience.

These criteria may then be used for assessments that are made by the teacher and by peers. Self-assessments can also be made using the same criteria.

Depending on the specific scenario used, and the nature of the particular issues that need to be considered, researched and addressed in the debate, any combination of subsets of the competences specified by the RFCDC could be assessed using this method, with the relevant descriptors being chosen as the criteria for inclusion in the rubric.

6. Role play or simulation assessment

General characterisation and description of the method

Role play or simulation assessment can take a range of different forms, and can adopt a group-based or individual-based format. In a group-based format, learners are assigned to work in small groups, and each group is given a particular role to play. For example, a group may be asked to take on the role of either a citizen, a public official, a politician or a financial donor to a political party. In advance of the simulation, each group has to think about the role they have been given and the functions that are associated with that role. This may involve research into the views held by the people who have the role, the approaches that they usually adopt, and the range of actions that they might take. The learners are then presented with a scenario that could occur in real life. In the scenario, each group of learners is given certain tasks to fulfil from the perspective of the role they are playing, and they have to act and respond in that scenario according to that role. The simulation may take place over an extended period of time, to allow the groups sufficient time to reflect on the options that are available to them, to make decisions, and to develop their responses. In a final debriefing session, the learners are given the opportunity to reflect on, analyse and evaluate the outcomes that occurred, and to consider what they have learned from the exercise.

In an individual-based format, learners are given their own individual role to consider (rather than working in groups). They may be given some time to research and reflect upon that role before the simulation begins. The teacher then gives them a series of descriptions of specific scenarios, and the learner has to decide how the person in their role would behave, think or feel in each scenario. The learners' responses need to be adaptive and appropriate to each individual scenario. In the debriefing after the exercise, the learners are asked to reflect on the reasons why they chose those particular reactions for the person in the scenarios. They also have to evaluate those reactions, and examine what they have learned as a consequence of the role play.

Learners' responses within scenarios can be assessed using a rubric based on the learning outcomes that the teacher wishes to foster in the learners. Assessments may be made by either the teacher or the learner or by peers. For the teacher, this assessment method helps to indicate both the progress that learners have made and the difficulties that they may be experiencing. Importantly, this assessment method can reveal a learner's level of proficiency in activating and using clusters of competences in a dynamic and fluid manner, because it requires the learner to engage with the simulated scenarios through a dynamic and adaptive critical-reflective process.

Because this assessment method is experiential, it can stimulate and inspire learners to reflect in entirely new directions by fostering and promoting their empathy and helping them to understand the lives, concerns, perspectives and behaviours of other people. The experiential nature of the method can also contribute to learners' sense of responsibility, and can support and promote their engagement and active participation. Finally, if research is conducted by the learners in preparation for the simulation, their autonomous learning skills may also be enhanced. This method of assessment can therefore serve several important pedagogical functions.

The format of administration, the roles and the scenarios that are used should be tailored to suit the particular learners and the specific learning outcomes that need to be fostered and assessed. Depending on the role and the scenarios that are employed, the method can in principle be used to assess combinations of subsets of all 20 competences.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

This method can be used with learners aged 10 years and older. However, it is important that the format of administration, the roles and the scenarios that are used are appropriate for the age of the learners who are being assessed.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

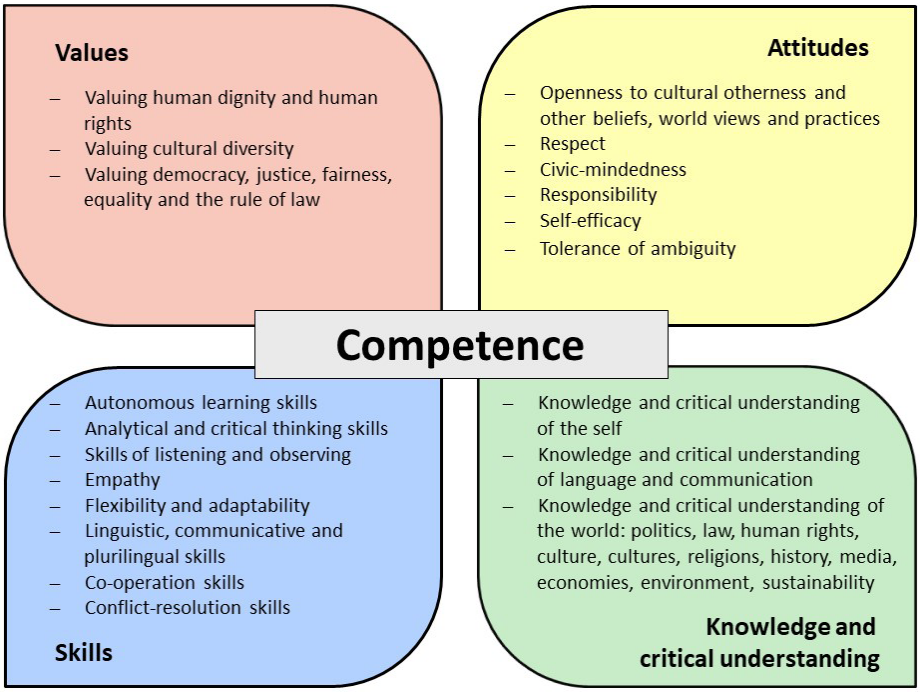
Assessments can be made by either the teacher or the learner or by peers. Peer assessment is suitable for use by older learners, but it may be helpful for peer assessments to be moderated by the teacher.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

The method is most suitable for low-stakes formative, diagnostic and monitoring purposes.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

Because this assessment method employs a relatively complex and fluid procedure, its successful use depends on the teacher's skill. Reliability can be enhanced by teachers being trained and experienced in its use, and by using rubrics to make their assessments. When learners or peers make the assessments, reliability is likely to be lower, although the use of a rubric may help to address this issue.

Validity

As long as reliability is high, and appropriate roles and scenarios are used for the learners concerned, validity may also be high. If the assessments are made by both teachers and learners, the degree of correspondence between their judgments may be used to index the degree of validity that has been achieved. That said, the validity of the assessment in the case of values and attitudes requires close attention – it is possible that at least some learners may tailor the values and attitudes that they express in their reflections on the simulation to those that they believe the teacher wants to hear.

Equity

A learner's prior experience with the role or with the scenario can bias the outcomes in a positive direction. If the roles and the scenarios that are used favour some learners over others, equity may be compromised. In addition, precautions need to be taken to ensure that the roles and the scenarios are not stereotyping of or disparaging towards others, and are appropriate given learners' cultural backgrounds. Finally, equity may be compromised if a learner has a language other than the language in which the simulation is being conducted as their first language.

Respectfulness

Because learners' own perceptions of the role are elicited by this method, and they analyse, negotiate and present their own understanding concerning the role, then as long as equity is ensured, this method is also respectful of learners.

Transparency

The method requires the ability to imaginatively project oneself into the role of another person, and this needs to be clearly explained to learners. The rubrics that are used for assessment also need to be made explicit to learners to ensure transparency.

Practicality

This assessment method is easy to administer at low cost in the classroom. However, both the teacher and the learners need good time-management skills, and the teacher needs to be well prepared to administer it.

Concrete examples of how the method is currently used

An example from Montenegro

This example, which uses a group-based format, is based on the activity called "Making links", which is published in P. Brander et al. (2012), *Compass – Manual for human rights education with young people*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

The activity involves negotiation about the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the government, NGOs and the media in a democracy. It is a complex and demanding activity, and is best suited for learners who are aged 13 years or older. The activity takes place with the following steps.

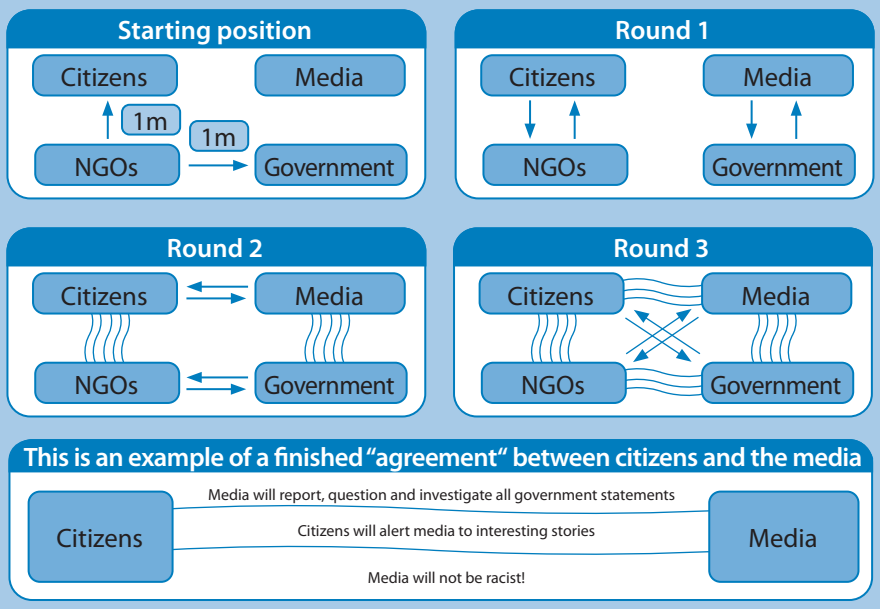
1. The teacher begins by explaining that the purpose of the activity is to draw a "map" of the relationships between four actors within (an ideal) democratic society.
2. The learners are then divided into four equal-sized groups to represent four actors in a democracy: the government, the NGO sector, the media and citizens.
3. Each group is given a sheet of A4 paper and a pencil to use for making notes, and they are asked to spend 10 minutes brainstorming the role that their actor plays in a democratic society, that is, what the main functions that it performs are. At the end of the time, they should agree on the five most important functions.

4. Next, the learners are told that they have to prepare their record sheets, using a large sheet of paper and a red pen. They have to write down the actor they represent at the top, and their five most important functions underneath.
5. The groups are then brought together to present their record sheets, and the groups share their answers. The learners are asked if they agree about the main functions of these four actors. If they wish to, the groups may amend their lists in the light of the feedback.
6. The four groups are then separated again, and they are given 15 minutes to brainstorm what they require from the other groups in order to carry out their own functions. Answers are recorded on a large sheet of paper using a green pen. When the time is almost up, the groups are asked to prioritise the two most important demands they make of each of the other actors. These are then listed under separate headings on the sheet of paper.
7. The learners are then given copies of the "Rules of play" (see Box 4.1). The teacher goes through these rules and makes sure everyone understands what they have to do.

Box 4.1
Rules of play

- The aim of the exercise is for each "actor" to get their demands accepted by each of the other "actors".
- The negotiations are made between pairs of "actors" in three rounds as follows:
  - Round 1: citizens and NGOs negotiate, and media and the government negotiate.
  - Round 2: citizens and the media negotiate, and NGOs and government negotiate.
  - Round 3: citizens and the government negotiate, and the media and NGOs negotiate.
- In each round, the pairs themselves decide who is to start and they take it in turns to make demands of each other.
- When making a demand, people should state the demand clearly and concisely. They should also explain what it involves and why they are making this particular demand, that is, why it is important to enable them to fulfil their own functions.
- When deciding whether or not to accept a demand, people should decide whether what is being asked is fair, and whether they would be able to carry it out.
- If the demand is accepted, then pairs use one of the "demander's" strands of yarn and tape it between the two "record sheets" to signify the agreement that has been made. The accepting group should make a brief note on their "record sheet" in a blue pen to remind them of their responsibilities and what they agreed to do.
- If the second group rejects the demand, the piece of yarn is put aside.
- Repeat the negotiations, until all demands have been discussed.

- In each round the process is repeated until there are connections between all four "actors".
- At the end of the process there will be a map to represent the relationship between the different actors in a democracy. Each of the actors will have a "record sheet" with a list of their functions in red pen, a list of demands of the other "actors" in green and a list of actions they have agreed to take in order to meet the demands of the other "actors" written in blue. The demands and actions are represented by coloured yarn.



8. The groups bring their record sheets into the middle of the room and lay them in a square about 1 metre apart (see diagram), with the members of each group positioning themselves near their corner.
9. Each group is given six strands of wool, a roll of tape and a blue pen.
10. The rounds of negotiation now begin. The teacher should allow 10 minutes for each round. Learners should be reminded that the aim is to map out relationships between the different actors and that, when a demand is accepted, one piece of wool should be taped between the two papers to signify acceptance of responsibility.
11. The activity should end with the following debriefing and evaluation while the learners are still sitting around the map.
12. The learners should look at the map they have created and reflect on the activity:
    - Was it hard to think of the functions that the government, NGOs, media and citizens perform in a democracy?
    - Were there any disagreements within the groups about which claims should be accepted or rejected?

- Which of the claims made by other groups did they not accept as responsibilities? Why was this? Do they think that such cases would cause any problems in reality?
- Were there responsibilities that each group accepted but which they had not recognised before? How do they feel about this now?
- Did the activity show the learners anything new about democratic society that they did not know before? Were there any surprises?

Assessments of the learners' performance are made by either the teacher, the learners themselves or peers within each group. The assessments are based on a rubric which shows the learning outcomes for those particular competences that the teacher is aiming to promote by means of the activity.

An example from Cyprus

In Cyprus, role play or simulation assessment often employs an individual-based format. The method can be used with learners aged 11 years or older, with the scenarios that are used as examples being chosen according to the age of the learners and the learning outcomes that are being assessed. Scenarios may be focused on refugees, children with disabilities, people with difficult family backgrounds, people with financial difficulties, people with different cultural backgrounds, people with different religions, scientists with different epistemological views, politicians with different political and world views, amongst others.

The following example is used with 11-year-old learners in either a language lesson or a civic education lesson. It is entitled "Understanding the life of refugees", and it proceeds as described below.

1. The classroom is arranged so that the learners are standing at the back and have space to move forward. The teacher provides the learners with explicit, accurate and clear information in advance about the assessment method, including information about the purpose of the assessment and how the learners should play the roles.
2. The teacher provides learners with scenarios concerning the lives of others – three or four scenarios may be used for the entire class so that there are several learners who all have the same role. The learners read their own scenarios and try to imagine how it is to live the life of the person in their scenario.
3. Each learner reads out his or her scenario in the plenary of the classroom.
4. The teacher explains to the learners that he/she will describe some incidents regarding the lives of the people of their scenarios, and the learners have to reflect about the role which they will play. Then, if they consider that an incident is related to their role, they have to move a step forward from their starting point.
5. The teacher reads out the incidents one by one, and the learners either take or do not take a step forward. Then, the learners reflect about their position in the classroom in relation to the positions of their classmates.
6. The learners play their own role, producing behaviour that is appropriate to each particular scenario and incident that is being acted. In particular, they think

aloud about their thoughts, emotions, feelings and expectations, according to the scenario and incident.

7. After completing the activity, the learners and the teacher discuss criteria for their choices about their behaviour in the role play. They explain what they have learned most from participating in the role play, if they have changed any of their beliefs or attitudes, and what actions, if any, they can undertake as a result of what they have learned from their role play.
8. At the end, the teacher and/or a peer writes his/her observations about the learners' behaviours, explanations and discussions. The learners then write reflective journals and structured reflections about their emotions, their feelings and their participation in the role play.

Examples of scenarios about refugees' lives include:

- Scenario 1: Yasmin comes from Syria. Her village was destroyed by the bombings and she no longer has a home. Her father gave all his possessions to a man who took them to Mytilene in a boat.
- Scenario 2: Clara comes from Guatemala. Life in her village has become intolerable since a gang of criminals began to constantly coerce the residents to give them money in order not to harm them. Clara and her family travelled to Mexico in their car.
- Scenario 3: Assat comes from Iran. He is not a Muslim, and so he and his family decided to leave Iran. They arrived in Crete on an old ship.

Examples of incidents that might be used in connection with these scenarios:

- Before you became refugees, you and your family had enough money for food, clothes, home, health care, etc.
- Before you became refugees, you and your family lived in a comfortable home with a telephone, TV and computer.
- Today, you live in refugee housing.
- In your country, you were afraid of being bombed.
- Today, you have a nice life and many things (clothes, shoes, etc.).
- Today, you are very sad and feel unsafe.
- Today, you are very happy and feel safe.
- You cannot speak Greek and you do not have friends.
- You want to go to school to be educated.

The validity, reliability and equity of the assessment is enhanced by using teachers' observations alongside the learners' reflective journals about their participation in this role play. A number of pre-specified criteria based on the intended learning outcomes are used. For this example, some possible criteria for assessment that might be used include the following:

- Teachers and/or peers can observe:
    a. the extent to which the learners question and challenge stereotypes about the way that they themselves and other people live;

b. the extent to which the learners display empathy;
c. the extent to which the learners look for new productive ways of relationality with the "other";
d. the extent to which the learners try to find ways for actions in order to make life situations better and fairer for all people.

- Learners can describe and reflect upon:

a. what they have learned from participating in the role play;
b. possible changes in their beliefs, opinions and attitudes as a result of participating in the role play;
c. possible actions that they could take to make life better for all people;
d. general feelings and thoughts about human dignity and human rights.

For assessments conducted in relationship to the RFCDC, a rubric can be drawn up based on the subsets of competences and descriptors that are relevant to the scenarios and incidents that have been used, with the rubric being used by the learners themselves, teachers or peers.

7. Dynamic assessment

General characterisation and description of the method

Dynamic assessment involves the teacher (or other assessor) actively supporting the learner during the assessment process in order to enable the learner to reveal his or her maximum level of proficiency. This is accomplished by exposing the learner to a situation in which the teacher interacts with the learner. The learner is asked to provide a commentary about his or her behaviour in that situation, the competences that they are using, and how and why they are adjusting their behaviour as the situation shifts and changes. The assessor probes the learner's commentary using questions and prompts. The assessor also analyses and interprets the learner's performance as it is taking place, and provides feedback as required. The assessor's behaviour can lead the learner to perform at a higher level of proficiency than he or she might have displayed if no support had been provided.

The situations that are used for dynamic assessment necessarily have to be ones that allow interaction and discussion between the learner and the assessor to occur. However, within this broad constraint, any activity, task or context can be used for the purposes of conducting a dynamic assessment. For this reason, there are numerous ways in which dynamic assessment can be used, which vary in terms of the nature of the task or activity around which the assessment is focused, the amount of structure that is provided, and the points at which interventions are made by the assessor.

A major difference between dynamic assessment and more static methods of assessment is the use of a process orientation rather than a product orientation. Thus, this method assesses not only the products but also the process through which those products have been achieved, which requires close attention to be

paid to both motivational and contextual elements that might be affecting the learner's performance.

The reliability of this method depends crucially on the skills of the person who is conducting the assessment. A teacher who is trained and experienced in the use of the method is the ideal person to conduct a dynamic assessment. However, even with an experienced teacher, it is still possible that lapses of attention can lead to key aspects of the learner's behaviour being missed, and it is also possible for the teacher's preconceptions and expectations about the learner to influence the type and amount of support that is offered to the learner. Both of these problems can affect the reliability of this method of assessment. Furthermore, if some learners are affected by these factors more than others, equity may also be compromised. As far as validity is concerned, if the elicited performance requires continuing assessor support in order to be sustained beyond the assessment situation (rather than representing a new level of proficiency that has been mastered by the learner during the course of the assessment), then the method does not have validity beyond the assessment situation itself.

Depending on the nature of the specific task or activity that is used, dynamic assessment can be employed to assess the proficiency of the learner in subsets of competences that are drawn from the full range of the 20 competences specified by the RFCDC.

It should be noted that, in practice, this assessment method may not be radically different from dialogue-based assessment. The difference lies mainly in the explicit attempt that is made by dynamic assessment to enhance the learner's current level of proficiency within the assessment situation, whereas dialogue-based assessment tends to be more focused on identifying the learner's current level of proficiency and identifying future learning goals. Because dynamic assessment is designed to enhance the learner's level of proficiency within the assessment situation, it has an explicitly pedagogical function.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

In principle, the method can be used with learners of any age, but it is most commonly used with learners aged 10 years and older.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

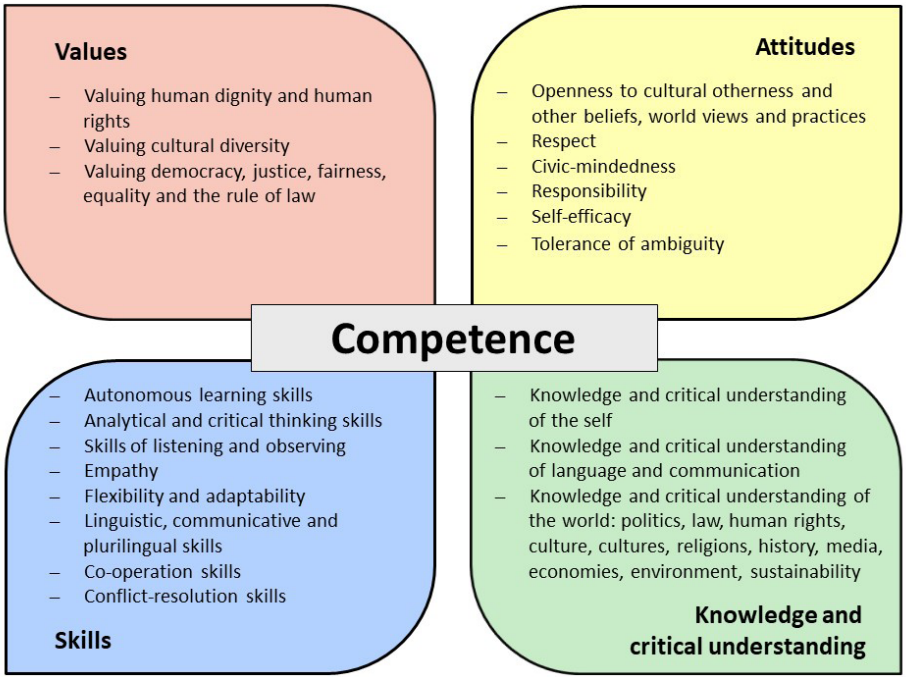
The assessor needs to be someone who is more proficient than the learner on the task or activity that is being used, so that the necessary support for the learner to attain a higher level of proficiency can be provided. The teacher is therefore the optimal person to conduct the assessment. Learners themselves can also be encouraged to make self-assessments of their own performance in the task or activity, both while it is in progress and on its completion. Peers can also make assessments, but under such circumstances moderation by the teacher is likely to be beneficial.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

The method can be used for low-stakes formative, diagnostic and monitoring purposes.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

Because of the possibility of the teacher's selective attention, preconceptions and expectations affecting the outcome, and because the method requires a fluid procedure that is specific to the particular situation used in the assessment, it may be hard to achieve high reliability in the use of this method. Reliability is likely to be highest when a trained and experienced teacher uses the method.

Validity

Validity will be compromised if reliability is not high. However, when reliability is high, the method yields valid information about the learner's perceptions, beliefs, critical understanding and analytical and critical thinking about the processes and competences that he or she is using in the activity or task. That said, if the learner cannot sustain the higher level of performance without the support of the assessor after the assessment has taken place, the method does not have validity beyond the assessment situation itself.

Equity

If the threats to reliability affect some learners more than others, this can compromise the equity of the assessment. Equity may also be compromised if the language in which the assessment is being conducted is not the learner's first language. In addition, care needs to be taken to ensure that the materials used in the assessment activity or task do not stereotype or disparage others and are suitable given the learner's own cultural background.

Respectfulness

Assuming that there are no threats to equity, this assessment method is inherently respectful of the learner, precisely because it pays close attention to the needs of the learner within the assessment situation and to meeting those needs.

Transparency

The assessment method is also inherently transparent, precisely because its rationale is based on providing the learner with the maximum amount of explicit help and support in tackling the task or activity.

Practicality

Practicality can be high, because the method is easy to administer at low cost in the classroom. However, there is the need to choose appropriate tasks and activities, and a high degree of planning is required.

Concrete example of how the method is currently used

An example from Cyprus

In this example from Cyprus, the dynamic assessment method is intended to enable learners to interact with the teacher and other learners, to self-assess and to reflect on the extent to which they accept, respect and appreciate the rich diversity of the world's cultures and freedom of beliefs and expression, and are willing to take transformative action in a multicultural society. It is used with 11-year-old learners in civic education.

The structure of this assessment method is described below.

1. The teacher places a straight line on the floor of the classroom (e.g. tape, wool, string), and places at one end a card with the name of a construct on it that he/she would like to promote, and at the other end a card with the name of the opposite construct on it.
2. A group of learners is placed in the centre of the line.
3. The teacher prepares a list of words related to the two constructs.
4. The teacher says a stimulus word and each learner moves towards one of the two ends of the line depending on how he or she understands the stimulus word in relationship to the two constructs.
5. The learners are asked to explain their understanding and why they made the choices that they did.
6. The teacher asks probing questions about the learners' feelings and their choices and decisions concerning the constructs – this is the first point at which the

teacher intervenes in the process in order to encourage the learners to reflect on their understandings, feelings and choices at a higher level of proficiency.

7. The learners then have to reflect further on their own position in relation to their classmates' positions, and they have the option to change their own position and to explain the reason for that change.
8. At the end of the process, the learners discuss the general criteria that they used for their choices and decisions, explain what they have learned from participating in the procedure, and discuss whether they have changed any of their beliefs or attitudes as a result. This is a second point in the process at which the teacher can intervene by using prompts to encourage the learners to think at higher levels of proficiency.
9. The teacher can identify obstacles, teach metacognitive strategies to the learners when necessary, and promote advances in the learners' thinking and feelings about the constructs through focused questioning and commentary.
10. The teacher writes observations about the learners' answers and discussions, while the learners write self-assessments and possibly peer assessments as well.

Example 1: Main constructs – Peace v. War

Stimulus words: refugees, security, family, education, religion, media, freedom of expression, poverty, volunteerism, tolerance, responsibility, hunger.

Example 2: Main constructs – Respect v. No respect

Stimulus words: tolerance, uncertainty, acceptance, diversity, volunteering, freedom of expression, religion, refugees, violence, responsibility, education.

Initial questions that can be used after the learners have positioned themselves on the line:

a. What are your reasons for moving in this direction?
b. How and why did you connect this word with [construct name]?
c. What were your thoughts and feelings when you made your decision?
d. What kinds of issues or difficulties did you have to think about in order to make your decision?
e. What helped you to overcome these difficulties?

On the basis of their answers to these questions, the teacher can then ask follow-up questions that are aimed at promoting the learners' competences to higher levels of proficiency.

Learners are assessed on their participation in the discussions, their opinions and ideas, and their effort to inspire and engage others to learn about and take action on issues of social justice. Assessments may be made by the teacher, by the learners themselves, and by peers. The assessments should be made using a rubric. In the case of assessments that are made in relationship to the RFCDC, the descriptors can be used to construct the rubric, depending on the particular competences involved and the levels of proficiency that have been targeted by the assessment.

8. Written answers to open-ended questions and essays

General characterisation and description of the method

Assessment through written answers to open-ended questions and essays is a traditional and very common method of assessment that is used in a wide range of educational settings. A fixed period of time may be set for the production of the written answer (e.g. in an examination), or learners may be allowed to spend an amount of time that is of their own choosing (e.g. when an essay is set as homework). This method can be used for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes, as long as the learner's literacy levels are sufficient for producing the answers required for the particular questions or essays that are set.

One advantage of the method is that it can be used to encourage learners to research and to make judgments on political, societal, social and intercultural problems and issues (including controversial issues), possibly drawing on their personal experiences and situations from their everyday lives that are of significance to them in order to do so. If suitable essay titles are set, essays can therefore be used to encourage learner research and reflection on a wide range of problems and issues, and to enhance their autonomous learning skills.

The method is particularly appropriate for use in cases where knowledge and understanding need to be assessed. It may be used in such a way that the learner only has to produce very simple and short descriptive responses (what are sometimes called "short-answer questions"), and it can also be used when there is a need to assess learners' abilities to engage in an extended, structured and argued exploration of issues (for which longer discursive essays are particularly suitable).

Essays can also be used to assess skills such as analytical and critical thinking skills as well as linguistic and communicative skills, by requiring the learner to organise, analyse and critically evaluate information in a coherent, clear and well-structured written format. In addition, autonomous learning skills can be assessed if the questions and essays are on topics about which the learner does not already have the necessary knowledge and understanding. Depending on the specific topic that is set, the method can also be used to assess skills of listening and observing, empathy, and flexibility and adaptability.

However, this method is not suitable for assessing values and attitudes. This is because it is possible to express values and attitudes in a written answer which one does not hold, simply because one knows these are the values and attitudes that the assessor expects or wants to see expressed. In other words, the validity of this method for assessing values and attitudes is undermined by its vulnerability to social desirability effects. The same problem does not arise in connection with the assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills, because these competences cannot be fabricated if the learner has not mastered them.

Assessing the content of written answers to open-ended questions and essays in a reliable manner can be challenging if suitable precautions are not taken. Reliability can be enhanced by various means, including using rubrics to guide the assessment, the training of those conducting the assessment, and using a senior assessor or a more experienced colleague to check and moderate the assessments that are made. In addition, in the case of high-stakes assessments in particular, blind-marking and independent double-marking should be used to ensure reliability.

In order for the method to be used in relationship to the RFCDC, suitable questions and essay titles should be set that require the learner to use their skills, knowledge and understanding (as these are described by the RFCDC), and the rubrics that are used for assessment purposes should be built directly from the descriptors that are provided for those competences in the RFCDC.

The written products that are generated through the use of this method can be used either as standalone assessments, or they can be incorporated into a larger reflective journal or portfolio.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

Due to the literacy demands that are made by this method, learners need to be aged 9 years or older. In all cases, the questions or essay titles need to be both age-appropriate and tailored to the learners' linguistic proficiency.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

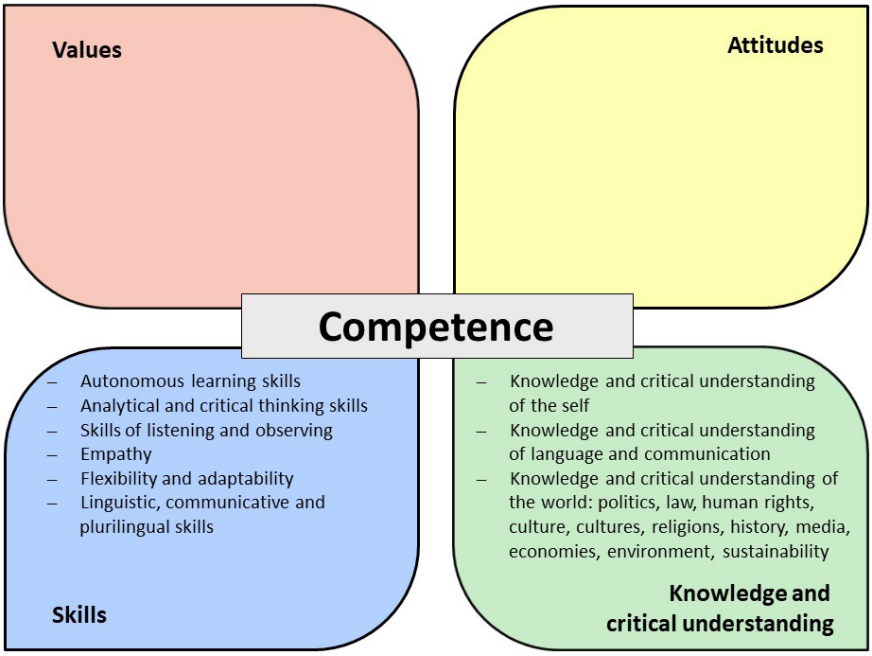
Assessments may be made by the teacher or by an external examination body. Assessments can also be conducted by a peer if the results are moderated by a teacher.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

The method is suitable for conducting assessments for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes, and it may be used for both low-stakes and high-stakes purposes.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

Nine of the 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

The reliability of this assessment method varies depending on the precautions that are taken. Reliability can be high if a rubric is used, if the person conducting the assessment is trained appropriately, and if a more experienced colleague checks and moderates the assessment outcomes. In addition, blind-marking and independent double-marking are important when the method is used for high-stakes assessments.

Validity

The validity of this method can be high if suitable precautions to ensure high reliability are used. However, validity can also be affected by the learner's literacy. It is important to ensure that the particular questions or essays that are set, and the assessment rubrics that are used, do not make unrealistic demands of learners' literacy skills.

Equity

The equity of this method can be high, as long as suitable precautions are taken to ensure that there are no subgroups of learners who might be negatively affected by the topics that are set or by the medium through which the learners' performance is assessed (i.e. writing). This means that attention needs to be paid to the learners' cultural backgrounds in setting topics and to their linguistic proficiency and literacy, and avoiding topics that might be construed as being inappropriate or disparaging towards others. Equity may be compromised if the language in which the assessment is being conducted is not the learner's first language.

Respectfulness

As long as the precautions concerning equity are taken (especially the avoidance of topics that might be construed as being inappropriate or disparaging towards others), and as long as actions are taken to ensure transparency (see below), this method is high in respectfulness.

Transparency

The method can be high in transparency if learners are given the assessment rubric or are informed about the expected learning outcomes in advance, and if the assessed written work is made available to learners who wish to appeal their results.

Practicality

The method is high in practicality for use within the classroom because it is easy to administer at low cost and does not require the use of special resources. However, when the method is used by an examination body for the purposes of high-stakes national assessments, it can be costly to implement due to the scale of the exercise and the need to take all appropriate steps to ensure high reliability and high validity.

Concrete examples of how the method is currently used

An example from Ireland

Assessment through written answers to open-ended questions and essays is very common in schools in Ireland. The examples given below are drawn from a national high-stakes situation where there is a formal assessment leading to certification that could determine a learner's access to higher education and further education and training courses. The method is used in a number of subject areas at the upper secondary level. Some example questions that are suitable for 16- to 19-year-olds are given below (simpler questions would be required for 9- to 15-year-old learners).

a. Short-answer questions

1. Name four groups involved in decision-making processes in schools.
2. Name one advantage and one disadvantage of proportional representation as an electoral system.
3. Give two reasons why freedom of the press is important in a democratic society.

b. Discursive essays

1. What is the link between migration and cultural diversity in Europe today? Your answer should make reference to the challenges and benefits of growing cultural diversity.
2. "There should be as few rules as possible." Discuss whether you agree with this view. Relate your ideas to school life and back up your arguments with reasons and examples. Your answer might include the following:
   - Are rules necessary? Why/Why not?
   - Are some rules more important than others?
   - Who should be involved in making the rules and why?
   - Are rules made which benefit some groups over others?
   - How do we make sure that people stick to the rules?
3. Discuss the statement: Our personal actions contribute to climate change. Your answer might include the following:
   - Greenhouse effect/global warming
   - Activities that contribute to climate change
   - Consequences of climate change
   - Solutions
   - Our responsibilities
4. Give two causes of hunger in the world and in your answer explain how economic, political, cultural or social structures contribute to this situation.
5. Pick one social problem in your country today and explain how the following factors affect the situation – resources, power, key relationships.

Further questions and sample exam papers on politics and society are available at: https://curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/Senior-Cycle-Subjects/Politics-and-Society/Assessment

Further questions and sample exam papers on religious education are available in Part 4 of the publication that can be found at: https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/b6ac1c7b-1b7c-418a-abe2-438741449401/SCSEC29_Religious_Ed_guidelines_Eng.pdf

In the examples provided above, the course specifications and the assessment procedures are agreed at national level and are made available to the general public. The marked papers are also made available to learners who wish to appeal the result. These procedures help to ensure a high degree of transparency. In addition, the assessments are administered by an external examination body that uses trained examiners, cross-moderating procedures, and supervises the examiners. All of these procedures help to ensure the reliability and validity of the outcomes of the assessments.

An example from Cyprus

Assessment through written answers to open-ended questions and essays is common in schools in Cyprus. In addition, this method is used in the Pancyprian Examinations for the School Leaving Certificate (Apolytirion) for secondary education for 17- to 18-year-olds. These examinations are prescribed by the Examinations Service, which is a government unit that belongs to the Higher Education Department of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture.

Two examples of questions drawn from the Pancyprian Examinations papers for the School Leaving Certificate are:

- "Consequences of global climate change compel us to think differently about our moral, political and personal ethics, because our value system was developed on the assumption that the atmosphere was an exploitable environment without limits." In an article that will be published in your school newspaper, develop three (3) problems due to arrogant human intervention in the environment and suggest three (3) ways in which an active and conscious citizen can contribute to limiting the reckless exploitation of the environment.
- "Corruption in human relationships and relationships between humans and nature, which is developed in a globalised consumer society, has gone beyond the limits." On the basis of the above quotation, in an oral presentation in a student conference, entitled "Challenges of the 21st century", refer to the impact of consumerism on the moral, economic and environmental fields. Then, develop three different ways – one for each field – with which the stakeholders of education can strengthen the modern human in order to effectively deal with the above impact.

This form of assessment has a long tradition in Cyprus, and it is used for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes in many school subjects.

The Pancyprian Examinations papers for the School Leaving Certificate (Apolytirion) are administered by national authorities (Examinations Service). They use trained examiners, independent double-marking, supervision of the examiners, and clearly defined rubrics for each question on the examination paper. These procedures ensure reliability and validity in the assessment process. The Pancyprian Examinations for the School Leaving Certificate (Apolytirion) specifications and assessment procedures are agreed at national level and are made available to the general public, which ensures transparency. Specifically, at the beginning of each school year, teachers, learners and parents have access to the broad learning outcomes that are being assessed, according to the new curricula.

Further information is available from: www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/en/.

An example from Azerbaijan

The Azerbaijan State Examination Center (ASEC-DIM) organises the final examinations for all secondary school graduates. Learners write essays by selecting one of the topics that has been set. Learners can receive the Attestation Certificate for the 9th and 11th grades only after they have passed these examinations.

The ASEC-DIM website provides examples of essay topics for the final assessment of the knowledge of learners in secondary schools and high schools: http://dim.gov.az/upload/iblock/dee/deec4b356e4acd6e76d338fab2668835.pdf.

The topics listed in this document may be translated using Google Translate (or another machine translation platform). Examples of (translated) questions are:

- What are high moral values?
- What qualities should a good person possess?
- What does a foreign language give to a person?
- What can I propose to create a healthy environment in Azerbaijan?
- What would I suggest to enhance the role of young people in society?

Essays are marked using rubrics. All learners are required to have a justified approach to the issue put forward, and are expected to present arguments and examples. At 9th grade, learners should be able to fully cover the set topic in 250 words or more. The essay plan (input, key contribution, outcome) should be included, and an appropriate logical sequence should be maintained. Writing insights in a neat, readable and clear line is an additional requirement. For 11th grade learners, essays must be 90 words or more. While it is not required for them to write an essay plan, it is essential that the subject matter is explained with an introduction and using logical and analytical sentences. Assessment procedures are made available to the general public to ensure transparency.

Professional markers and examiners are trained to provide reliability and consistency in marking. They are highly familiar with and experienced in the assessment format, and head examiners are also used to check, moderate and control the assessment process. The marked papers are made available to learners who wish to appeal the result.

An example from Belarus

This method is widely used within the classroom in Belarus at all levels of school education in order to assess the personal development and social competences of learners. The method is suitable for all school subjects. It is implemented in the context of a competence-based approach, which means that it aims to assess not only the acquisition of knowledge but also learners' ability to solve topical social problems that have been explored in lessons. The educational standards (in Belarusian and Russian) are available here: https://adu.by/images/2019/01/obr-standarty-ob-sred-obrazovaniya.pdf.

In the case of social studies, learners are asked to prepare essays that reflect their opinion about a topic, usually a topic that is related to a controversial issue or a multifaceted social and cultural phenomenon. Examples from a textbook that is suggested for high school learners include the following.

- Identify the global problem (challenges) of modern society. Describe the causes, prerequisites and factors influencing the issues. Using internet resources, find particular examples of positive and negative aspects of this urgent contemporary problem.
- What are the principles of pluralism, the rule of law and separation of powers? Based on the text of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, analyse how they are implemented in the Constitution.
- What is civil society? What is its role in the rule of law? Using materials from the media, give examples of the activities of civil society in the Republic of Belarus.

Learners are encouraged to define concepts precisely, carry out research, and express their thoughts.

Rubrics are used for assessing learners' essays, based on official learning performance indicators. Learning performance indicators are provided for five levels of proficiency, each of which is divided into two further levels. The learning performance indicators are similar to the RFCDC descriptors for analytical and critical thinking skills in particular.

Errors that may be made by learners are divided into significant versus non-significant errors. Significant errors include misuse of terminology, replacement of the essential features of the characterised phenomena and processes with non-essential ones, and inability to use various sources of information. Non-significant errors include stylistic errors in the answer, and misspelling words.

The transparency of the assessment is high, because learners are provided with an outline description of the assessment objectives, and the norms for assessing the results of educational activities of learners are publicly available on the website of the Ministry of Education.

Additional information, and a complete collection of textbooks for schools in Belarus (in Belarusian and Russian), is available from: http://e-padruchnik.adu.by/.

An example from Montenegro

This example differs from the preceding examples, all of which have focused mainly on essays. This example instead uses a classroom-based activity, which is followed by a set of open-ended questions about the activity, the written answers to which are then used for the assessment of the learners. This method can be used for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes, as long as these are all low-stakes, and it is suitable for learners who are aged 11 years and older. It is adapted from "Our futures", an activity published in P. Brander et al. (2012), *Compass – Manual for human rights education with young people*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

In this activity, learners draw, contemplate and discuss their hopes and concerns for the future of their generation. Among the issues addressed are:

- Environmental issues affecting future generations
- How local development does or does not meet local people's needs
- The forces that drive development

The aim is to promote skills for an open discussion, team work and a visionary approach.

The instructions for the activity are as follows:

1. Introduce the concept of change over time. Ask the learners to think back to when they were younger and what their homes and the local streets looked like, and how they have changed. Have any of the rooms in the school been redecorated, or is there any new furniture? Are there any new buildings in the neighbourhood (for instance, shopping centres, housing estates, roads, play parks or cycle tracks)?
2. Ask the learners why these things have changed and who made the decisions about what should be renewed and how it should be done. For example, did a particular housing scheme provide much-needed, low-cost housing for local people, or was it luxury apartments or holiday homes built as an investment by a finance company?
3. Briefly discuss one or two examples: who has benefited from the developments and how? What would they have done if they had been in control?
4. Now make the links with making decisions that affect other people and human rights. Do the learners think that human rights make a useful framework for decision making? Will human rights be more or less important for decision makers in the future? Why?
5. Tell the group that the opportunity is now! This is the moment for them to take the chance to start thinking about – and influencing – the futures they may inhabit.
6. Ask learners to organise themselves into groups of three to four.
7. Hand out paper and pens and ask them to draft or sketch ideas for their ideal neighbourhood/town of the future. They have a free hand. The limits are their own imaginations.
8. When each group has agreed a draft plan, they should transfer it onto a large sheet of paper and complete it with paint and collage materials.
9. When the work is done, ask each group in turn to present their plan and to say where they got their ideas from and how they developed them. Allow time for short questions and answers after each presentation.

The learners can then be asked to write down their own individual answers to the following open-ended questions:

1. Were you able/allowed to take part or contribute to the work of the whole group?
2. How did you feel when receiving feedback on your plans?
3. Would you be ready to compromise about some of your plans?
4. Did you enjoy the role of the architect of your future?
5. Do you think adults would pay attention to your ideas? How much attention do you think they would give to your ideas?

6. What rights would you have as a future citizen?
7. What obligations would you have as a future citizen?

The learners' written answers to these short-answer questions can then be used for assessment purposes, using the RFCDC descriptors to aid the assessment of their responses.

This method is high in practicality, and it can be easily adapted for use in relationship to other classroom-based learning activities.

9. Scenario-based assessment using questioning

General characterisation and description of the method

As has been noted earlier, scenarios can be used as a starting point for debate-based assessment (see section 5 above) and for role play or simulation assessment (see section 6 above). In addition, scenarios can be used to assess learners' proficiency in applying their skills, knowledge and understanding to the situations described in scenarios simply by asking them direct questions about the scenarios. These questions can be used to explore, in considerable detail, learners' ability to make judgments about issues, possibilities, outcomes or courses of action that are involved in or entailed by the situations that are described in the scenarios.

The scenarios used for this purpose need to be realistic, and they ideally need to describe authentic situations that are of relevance and interest to learners themselves so that they are able to relate to them. For example, scenarios might concern: managing a conflict that develops between different groups of learners within a school; writing to a newspaper to complain about their biased reporting of an event; challenging the stereotyping of a particular cultural group; responding to a cultural misunderstanding that occurs between two people who have different cultural affiliations; organising an environmental clean-up operation; addressing the tension between universal human rights and local cultural traditions; responding to hate speech on the internet; taking action on climate change.

The scenarios can tap into situations that occur at various levels, including the personal level of the learner and his or her friends and family, the level of the local community, the region or country in which the learner is living, or at the global community level.

Scenarios can also be designed to vary in the demands that they make on learners. For example, scenarios may vary in the amount of explicit information that they provide. Easier scenarios might provide a great deal of supporting information which the learner can then use to guide his or her judgments, whereas more difficult scenarios might provide far less information and instead require learners to draw extensively on their own knowledge and understanding in order to respond appropriately to the questions.

If the scenarios and questions are given to learners in written text, they need to be expressed using relatively simple language so that those who have more limited

language proficiency do not have their performance unfairly constrained by the language used in the assessment. Visual materials such as cartoons, photographs or videos can be used to reduce the reading load on learners during the assessment and to help engage their attention.

The questions that learners are asked about the scenarios can be used to target different cognitive processes and forms of reasoning. For example, depending on the format of the questions, learners may be required to apply factual knowledge to the scenario, to interpret the scenario, to understand the underlying assumptions of the scenario, to analyse the scenario in detail, to apply systematic principles or rules to the scenario, to evaluate different perspectives contained in the scenario, to synthesise the different elements of the scenario in order to generate a suitable action plan or outcome, or to evaluate the possible consequences of particular courses of action in the scenario.

The way in which questions need to be answered by learners can also be varied. For example, some questions may require the learner to choose the correct response from a set of provided responses. The provided responses may take either a binary forced-choice format (e.g. yes/no, true/false, appropriate/inappropriate, relevant/irrelevant) or a multiple-choice format (in which either only one answer out of the set of provided answers, or as many answers as the learner wishes to select, may be chosen).

Forced-choice and multiple-choice questions are very popular assessment choices, due to the simplicity and rapidity with which they can be administered and then marked with a high degree of reliability by the assessor. However, it is important to note that, for assessing learners' competences in relationship to the RFCDC, forced-choice and multiple-choice questions should always be asked in relationship to a specific scenario in which a particular situation is described. This is because the RFCDC defines competence as the ability to apply relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding in an effective, appropriate and adaptive manner to relevant situations. Asking forced-choice or multiple-choice questions on their own, without an accompanying scenario, is unable to indicate anything about the learner's ability to apply their competences to concrete situations. Hence, while it might be tempting to ask forced-choice or multiple-choice questions without an accompanying scenario in order to assess learners' knowledge and understanding of, for example, politics, law, human rights, history or media, these questions will not yield any information about learners' ability to apply this knowledge and understanding to relevant situations in an effective and appropriate manner.

In addition to forced-choice and multiple-choice questions, open-response questions can also be used in scenario-based assessments, where learners have to construct their own responses to the questions (rather than select a response from a set of provided responses). If open-response questions are included, then learners' responses to these questions will have to be analysed and interpreted for their relevance and appropriateness to the scenario by the assessor. The reliability and validity of these judgments can be enhanced by training assessors and by using a rubric to guide the assessor's judgments. It should be noted that

these open-response questions are similar to short-answer questions, which were discussed above in section 8 (Written answers to open-ended questions and essays).

A significant limitation on the use of scenario-based assessment is that it is not suitable for assessing learners' values and attitudes, because of social desirability effects – if learners know the values and attitudes that they are expected to use in thinking about the scenarios, they can apply them to the scenarios with relative ease, even though they do not hold those values and attitudes themselves. By contrast, knowledge, understanding and skills cannot be fabricated in the same way if the learner has not mastered them. For this reason, scenario-based assessment can only be used to assess learner's knowledge, critical understanding and skills.

In recent years, there has been an increasing trend to administer scenario-based assessments digitally. This involves presenting the scenarios on a computer screen, which allows for their dynamic presentation and the use of pictures, cartoons, videos, etc. to capture and maintain the learner's attention. The test questions and response options (in the case of forced-choice and multiple-choice questions) are also presented on the screen, with learners being required to use the keyboard or mouse to input their responses to the questions. If only forced-choice and multiple-choice questions are asked, the assessment of the learner's skills, knowledge and understanding can be made automatically by the software through which the tests are administered, and the reliability of the assessment will be maximised. This method of assessment is obviously a very efficient method for assessing large numbers of learners in a short period of time. However, if open-response questions about the scenario are included, with answers being entered via the keyboard, then learners' responses to these questions will have to be interpreted and judged for their relevance and appropriateness to the scenario by the assessor, ideally using a rubric to maximise the reliability of the judgments.

A major difficulty for teachers who may wish to use scenario-based assessments is that good scenarios and suitable accompanying questions are challenging and time-consuming to construct – specialised technical expertise is required to design high-quality scenarios and questions. In addition, if the aim is to implement the assessments digitally, then implementing the assessments will require computer programming skills. For this reason, it is unlikely that individual teachers will be able to create their own digital scenario-based assessments. Instead, it is much more appropriate for organisations with the appropriate resources (e.g. examining bodies or education ministries) to design these kinds of assessments and to make them available online for learners and teachers to use.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

This method is most suitable for use by learners in secondary and higher education, but can be extended to younger learners if the scenarios and response options presented to them employ an age-appropriate format (e.g. using videos or cartoons on a computer screen).

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

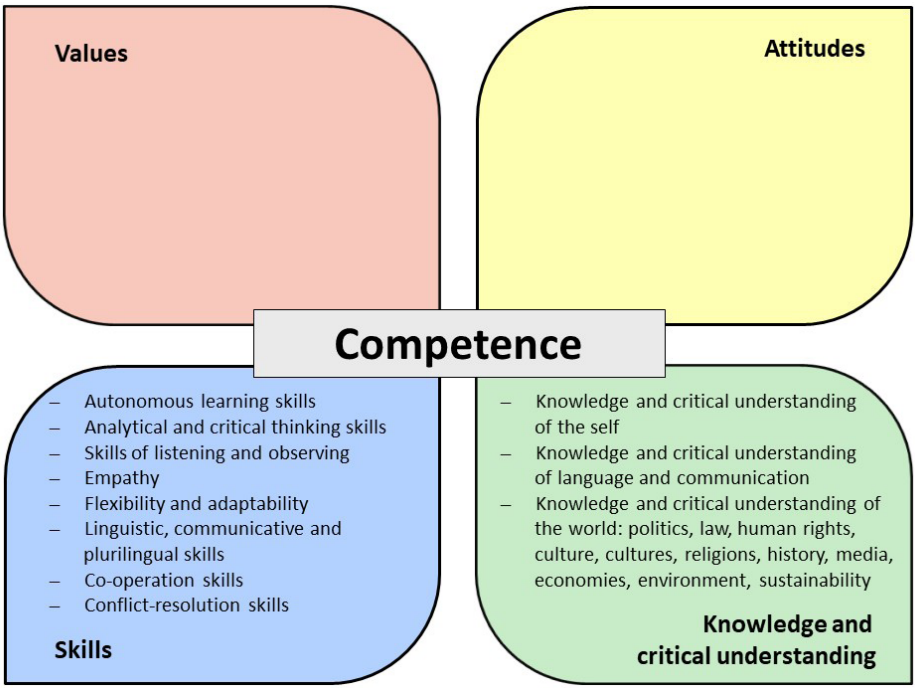
If a digital scenario-based assessment is available online, learners can log on and take the test independently of their teachers and receive their own personalised feedback. Alternatively, teachers can arrange for their learners to take the test and supervise the learners while they are taking it. If the assessment is being administered in a more traditional paper-and-pencil format, and open-ended questions about the scenario are included, then teachers or trained assessors are the most appropriate assessors. If only forced-choice or multiple-choice questions are included, then learners themselves can conduct their own assessments, using a marking key supplied by the teacher.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

This method can provide useful low-stakes formative, diagnostic and monitoring feedback to learners, and it can also be used for low-stakes summative purposes. If the assessments have been professionally designed and implemented, for example by a central examining board, they can also be used for high-stakes summative purposes.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

Eleven of the 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

If only unambiguous forced-choice or multiple-choice questions are asked, the reliability of the assessment will be high. However, if open-ended questions are included and the responses to these have to be marked by an assessor, then reliability is likely to be lower. Reliability can be enhanced by training assessors, and by assessors using a rubric to guide their interpretations of the learners' answers.

Validity

If the scenarios and the response options are not well designed, validity is likely to be compromised, because learners' performance can be affected by irrelevant or distracting features of the scenarios and response options. Validity is also compromised if the language that is used in the scenarios and response options is too advanced for the learners who are being tested.

Equity

If some learners do not have sufficient proficiency in the language in which the assessment is being conducted (e.g. because it is not their first language), they will be unfairly disadvantaged in the assessment. It is also important, when designing these tests, to ensure that the scenarios and questions that are used do not contain any disparaging or stereotypical statements about others, and are suitable for all learners irrespective of their cultural backgrounds.

Respectfulness

As long as there are no disparaging or stereotypical statements within the assessment materials, respectfulness can be high, especially if learners take the assessment independently of their teachers and receive their own personalised and confidential feedback.

Transparency

If teachers inform learners about the nature of the assessment in advance, and explain the possible outcomes and the purposes for which these will be used, transparency should be high. Practice scenarios and questions may also be given in advance of the assessment itself, to familiarise learners with what they will need to do in the assessment, and to provide them with the opportunity to ask any questions that they might have about the method.

Practicality

It is often not practical for teachers to design scenario-based assessments themselves. However, if such assessments are available online, then this is a very simple and convenient method for assessing learners, as long as learners have the necessary internet access.

Concrete example of how the method is currently used

An example from Lithuania

In Lithuania, 16- to 17-year-old learners can take an optional assessment in social sciences online that is provided by the National Examination Centre. The assessment was introduced because it was judged that schools needed an external instrument to help learners document their strengths and weakness. A centralised assessment was regarded as the most effective way to provide this, because it could be developed relatively rapidly, it was relatively cheap because it was developed at the national level, it could be introduced quickly throughout the entire education system by being implemented digitally, and it was able to provide feedback to large numbers of learners on an immediate or very short timescale.

The construction of the assessment was based on the social sciences curriculum. The curriculum aims to develop the comprehension of the principles of living in a democratic society, the relationship between local, national and international aspects of societal life, and the impact of cultural heritage; and to initiate the ability of learners to participate actively in social life, to communicate and co-operate with others, to achieve personal and societal goals, and to develop national and civic self-awareness. More specifically, learners need: (i) to understand the nature of democratic society and the state, the principles and norms of democracy, and the historical development of Lithuania and Europe; (ii) to understand and evaluate the reasons and consequences of social phenomena, political, social, economic, cultural events and processes; and (iii) to respect national traditions and the traditions of other nations, and actively participate in community activities in regard to the principles of sustainable development.

The questions in the online assessment are age-appropriate, and they assess learners' knowledge and understanding across the integrated contents of history, geography, economics and civic education. The assessment contains multiple-choice questions about the European Union and its impact on national states, civic rights, tolerance, procedures for making decisions in states, and contemporary society. However, in addition and most crucially, the assessment examines learners' ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to concrete situations that are described using scenarios. Learners' analytical and critical thinking skills are also assessed in this way. For this part of the assessment, open-ended questions are used to assess learners' ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to the situations described in the scenarios.

There are two groups of learners who take this assessment of social sciences online. One group logs into the assessment system on a particular day, and their responses to multiple-choice questions are marked automatically while their open-ended answers to the more challenging scenario-based questions are marked by the National Examination Centre. The second group of learners log into the assessment system at their own chosen time, and they only receive the multiple-choice questions that are automatically marked; at the end of taking the assessment, the learners receive the results. Because the assessment is not obligatory, the decision about which type of

assessment to offer learners is made by their school. The results of the assessment may be used by teachers to adjust or adapt their teaching.

10. Project-based assessment

General characterisation and description of the method

Project-based assessment is an integral part of project-based learning, and enables learning and assessment to be combined within the same process. A project normally leads to the creation of substantial products by learners. In addition, learners usually have to provide documentation on the process of conducting the project and the learning process that has occurred, as well as critical self-reflections about their learning during the course of conducting the project. Projects often culminate in a presentation of the project and its outcomes to the whole class.

Projects can be undertaken either independently or in collaboration with other learners. They usually require the learners themselves to undertake the planning and design work, decision making, investigative activities and problem solving as part of the project.

If the project is designed and conducted by a group of learners, it is possible for each learner to take on a particular specialised role within the project, according to his or her distinctive strengths and abilities. Alternatively, all learners within the group can work collaboratively on all aspects of the project together. In either case, the performance of the members of the team in communicating with each other, working co-operatively with each other, managing and resolving conflicts, and negotiating actions and outcomes, can all be factored into the assessment of the project.

Projects are normally problem-focused. They require learners to understand the problem, identify the information that is needed to address the problem, acquire that information, apply the information as well as their knowledge and understanding to the problem, and generate possible solutions to the problem. In the process, they may need to justify the actions that they decide to take for addressing the problem, not only from a pragmatic perspective but also from a political, social or moral perspective. A crucial part of the assessment process is for the learners themselves to self-evaluate the problem-solving strategy that they have chosen to use, and their success (or otherwise) in carrying out that strategy.

To maximise learner performance, projects should be based on issues or situations that are meaningful and engaging to the learners themselves, and ideally they should require activity not only in the classroom but also in the wider social, civic or political world. For the purpose of conducting assessments in relationship to the RFCDC, projects should also be constructed in such a way that learners have to apply their values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding across a range of situations. Projects also need to be structured so that the products and the accompanying documentation provide information about how clusters of competences have been mobilised and used across contexts, and about how they have been adjusted over time according to the needs of the situations encountered during the project.

Designing and conducting a full project is necessarily a substantial and time-consuming activity. For this reason, an alternative possibility is to use hypothetical projects, which are not actually conducted in practice but are planned, designed, discussed, presented and critically evaluated in the classroom. This provides a simpler option than actually conducting a full project, and can be more practical if the time that is available for the project is limited.

Projects can be assessed through self-assessment, peer assessment or teacher assessment, and final assessments can be negotiated between the teacher and the learner, based on information derived from all three sources. If the project has been conducted by a group of learners, additional assessments can also be made of the effectiveness of the group in collaborating and achieving the intended products.

However, there are some drawbacks to project-based assessment. For example, teachers and peers may find it difficult to assess the products and documentation that result from projects because of their volume and complexity. For this reason, project-based assessments can be very time-consuming to conduct, and reliability may be low. Ideally, assessments should be performed by multiple assessors (e.g. by the learner, peers and the teacher), using a common rubric. Reliability is likely to be highest when a trained and experienced teacher conducts the assessment, when there are two or more independent trained assessors conducting the assessment, and when a senior experienced colleague moderates the assessment outcomes.

Project-based assessment, being an integral part of project-based learning, clearly fulfils both pedagogical and assessment purposes, and can help to promote learner reflection and autonomous learning skills in significant ways. Thus, despite the difficulties that may be associated with assessing the products and documentation that result from projects, this is often an attractive form of assessment for many teachers.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

The method is best suited for use with learners in secondary and higher education. However, younger learners can also be assessed through the use of this method if age-appropriate topics are used and if the requirements of learners are simplified.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

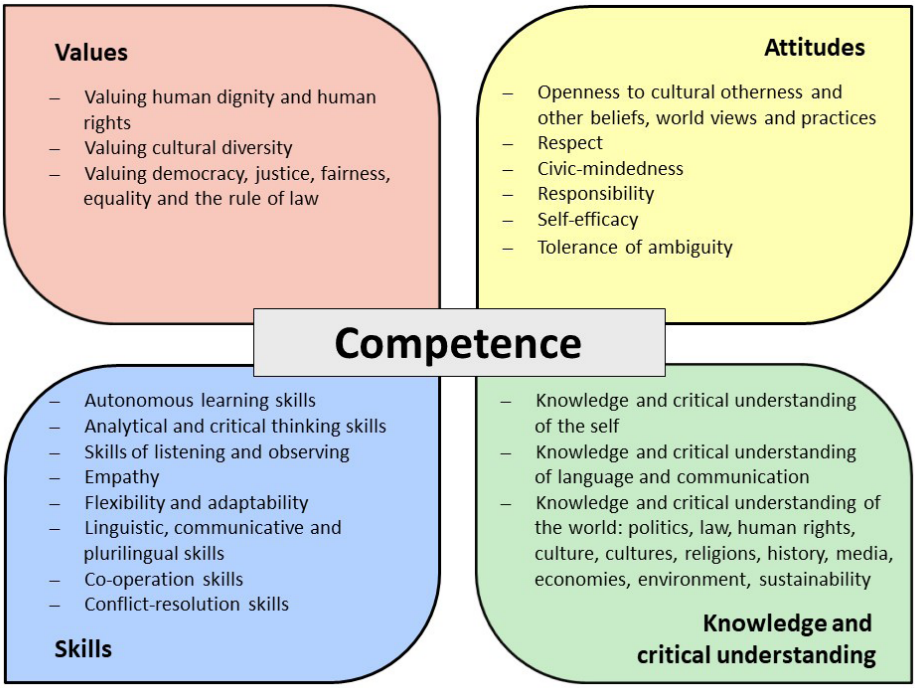
Assessments can be made by learners themselves, peers and teachers.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

Project-based assessment can be used for low-stakes formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes. Due to the complexity of the assessment process and the potential problems with reliability, the method is less suitable for high-stakes assessments.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

It can be challenging to assess the products and documentation that result from projects due to their volume and complexity, which can compromise reliability. Reliability can be enhanced by having trained and experienced teachers conduct the assessment, and by using rubrics to conduct the assessment, multiple assessors, and a senior colleague to moderate assessment outcomes.

Validity

If the reliability is high, then validity can also be high, as long as clear instructions and the assessment rubric are given to learners before they commence work on the project. However, any individual learner's performance is likely to depend, at least in part, on their personality and their ability to work as a member of a group, so that learners who are socially anxious or who have poor co-operative skills may have their proficiency on other competences underestimated.

Equity

Equity in assessment may be affected if some of the learners in a class are socially anxious or have poor co-operative skills, because these learners could disproportionately receive lower estimates of their proficiency in other competences.

Respectfulness

If learners themselves are allowed to choose the problems that are addressed in their projects, if the discussions and decision making that take place within the working group are respectful of the dignity of all group members, and if learners are allowed to decide how to present the products of their work, then respectfulness can be high. It is also possible for learners to participate in the construction of the rubric that will be used for the assessment – this would further enhance the respectfulness (and transparency) of the method.

Transparency

Learners should be given clear guidelines and instructions before starting the project. They should also be given the assessment rubric at the outset so that they are aware of the expected learning outcomes. Alternatively, they can participate in the construction of the rubric together with the teacher before the project commences.

Practicality

It can be time-consuming for learners to conduct projects and also for assessments to be carried out. Learners' ambitions may therefore need to be moderated by the teacher to enable the projects to be carried out within the timetabled hours that are allocated to the subject or course, and to enable the assessments to be conducted within the available time.

Concrete examples of how the method is currently used

An example from Belarus

When project-based assessment is used in Belarus, close attention is paid to the need for the whole cycle of the project to be completed within the available time. This means ensuring that there is time for all of the phases of the project, including: setting the problem; identifying possible ways to address the problem; identifying possible solutions; gathering information; discussing and analysing the information in small groups; preparing the materials and the arguments to be made in a presentation to the class; making the presentation and defending the arguments that have been made.

The process that is used relies on the use of hypothetical projects rather than full projects and is as follows. First, the learners are divided into two to four groups. The teacher gives cards containing hypothetical situations to all of the groups. The learners discuss the situations and jointly decide which situation to address. They then analyse all the factors that are involved in dealing with the situation, and the resources that are required. Next, the learners compose and propose an action plan

on how to solve the problem. Finally, every group makes a presentation to the class, explaining their analysis and their choice of solution, and justifying it.

Some examples of the problem situations that might be used:

1. "Proposal to the city council concerning a monument"

   The local authorities decide to erect a monument to a well-known citizen, and the city council decides to consider the proposals of the community. What criteria should the local authorities be guided by for choosing a candidate? Whose name should be immortalised? Explain your position.

2. "The school of the future"

   Imagine that you have an opportunity to build a school. You need to create and design the building, determine the rules of school life, choose the teachers, etc. How would you organise everything? Prepare a draft and defend it before the minister of education.

A detailed rubric is used for assessing the learners' performance on the project. This rubric covers their understanding of the objectives and content of the assignment, the quality of the group work, the originality of the solutions proposed, the quality of the reasoning, the quality of the presentation, and the quality of public-speaking skills and attitudes towards the class.

An example from Cyprus

Project-based assessment is applicable in most educational contexts and is common in schools in Cyprus. The focus of the example that is given here is from science education.

The study of historical development of scientific ideas provides opportunities for learners to understand the nature of science and to value the hard work, ethics and morality of frontier scientists. By referring to the stories of some famous scientists, learners can recapture the lives of scientists, the ways they thought, the work they did, their ethics and the joy and frustrations they experienced. Through reading the stories of scientists, learners can understand that the knowledge generated by one generation is usually expanded, modified, or even discarded by the next generation. Additionally, learners can understand that science is a complex social activity and that morality and ethics play an important role.

The current example is used in biology in secondary education for 16-year-old learners, and concerns ethics and the nature of science. It is focused on Rosalind Elsie Franklin and the structure of DNA. The procedure that is used is described below.

1. The learners are divided into groups of four or five. Learners are asked to make a biography of Rosalind Elsie Franklin, and to take into consideration aspects regarding the nature of science and ethics.
2. The learners have sufficient time to search, organise and analyse information from a variety of sources. The biography may include the following:
   - Who is Rosalind Elsie Franklin?
   - What did Rosalind Elsie Franklin do?
   - What was her discovery?

- Where and when did the discovery take place?
- How was it discovered?
- How were her ideas used by other scientists? Why?
- What elements of the discovery seem most revealing about the nature of science? Why?
- Explain the ethical dimension of this discovery.
- What elements of the discovery of DNA reveal that science is a complex social activity and that morality and ethics play an important role?
- Elements of the personality and discovery of Rosalind Elsie Franklin, which you consider essential to explain.

3. The biography can then be presented in a variety of ways such as a PowerPoint presentation, a role play, an essay, a poster or a leaflet.
4. Each group is given 15 minutes to present their work in the class.
5. Project-based assessment employing a rubric is then used to evaluate how successfully the learners have addressed specific goals and performed appropriately.

In the assessment, the learners are assessed on their participation in their autonomous work, in the group discussion and co-operation, in the group presentation, and on their ideas/opinions in the presentation of the biography. The specific criteria for assessment are developed with the participation of the learners, and a formal assessment rubric is drawn up to guide the assessments. Examples of the criteria that may be used in the rubric are the following:

- Looks for information from a variety of sources.
- Evaluates the validity of information, organises, analyses information in a logical way.
- Recognises and responds to others speaking.
- Able to recognise and use appropriate non-verbal communication cues.
- Shares freely and explains with details.
- Supports and leads others in discussion.
- Gives feedback.
- Works well with others.
- Assumes a clear role and related responsibilities.
- Presents information in a logical, interesting way which the audience can follow.
- Presentation well planned and coherent.
- Covers topic completely and in depth.
- Uses critical thinking and explains all dimensions of the topic (scientific, ethical, social, etc.).
- Communicates ideas with enthusiasm.
- Uses voice properly.
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills.
- Maintains eye contact with audience.

11. Reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections

General characterisation and description of the method

Reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections require the learner to record and reflect on their own behaviour, learning and personal development. The record that is produced is usually a written text, but it could also include non-verbal self-expressions or art works. The reflections may be freely structured by the learner, or structured through the use of a pre-specified format designed to ensure that the reflections provide evidence about the specific learning outcomes that are being assessed. For use in relationship to the RFCDC, learners can be asked to structure their narratives and reflections in such a way that they record and reflect on all of the competences that they have deployed across a range of different situations or contexts, and how they adapted or adjusted the competences they were using as those situations developed.

Reflective journals are highly suitable for use during an experiential course of study, where learners can be required to write entries prior to the start of the course, while the course is proceeding, and at the end of the course. By using the entries to describe their experiences and to reflect on the thoughts, feelings and behaviours that occurred in response to those experiences, the journal entries can help learners to organise and make sense of the experiences and their reactions to them. Reflections about specific critical incidents that have particularly challenged the learner are especially important, because they can encourage the learner to focus on how the incident challenged their capacities and how they benefited and developed their competences as a consequence of the incident. The reflections can also involve repeated returns to, and re-analysis of, earlier experiences that were found to be especially challenging at the time. The act of critically reflecting on such experiences can help to precipitate new ways of thinking and responding, and cumulatively a journal can reveal advances and developments in the competences of the learner. A reflective journal can therefore be used to track and assess the progress that the learner has made across a substantial period of time.

A reflective journal may be used solely for self-assessment, and it can be a private document that is confidential to the learner, with the teacher or peers only having access to its contents if they are invited to view it by the learner. Alternatively, the teacher may act as a mentor, reading and discussing the journal with the learner. Another possibility is that the teacher encourages pairs of learners to act as mentors for each other.

A further possibility is that the teacher formally assesses the contents of the journal using a rubric in order to derive a descriptive profile of the learner's proficiency in the use of his or her competences at the time when the work on the journal was completed. If the journal is to be assessed in this way (for example, for a summative purpose at the end of a course of study), the learner needs to be informed about this in advance, and should be given the assessment rubric at the outset. Guidelines should also include information about the analytic depth required in the journal

entries, the amount of detail required, the writing style that should be used, and the expected length of the entries. It may be helpful for learners to be given, before they begin to compile their own journals, examples of the types of entries that they are expected to produce – these examples may be annotated to highlight the key features that are used to make assessments. To ensure that learners are on the right track, it can also be helpful for the teacher to collect learners' reflective journals at multiple time points through a course of study, to ensure that the style is appropriate and that the reflections are being written in sufficient depth. If a journal is to be used for a summative purpose in this way, teachers need to be aware that the assessment process requires a great deal of reading and can be time-consuming to conduct.

Structured autobiographical reflections are a variant on the reflective journal method. Whereas reflective journals may simply consist of open-ended text entries in which the learner describes and reflects on his or her experiences, a structured autobiographical reflection asks a series of specific questions about each experience, with the questions being asked in a particular order that helps to scaffold and channel the learner's reflections in a particular direction. The structure can therefore be used to ensure that the reflections remain focused around the desired learning outcomes while encouraging the reflections to become progressively richer in detail and more nuanced in focus. For example, the opening questions may be descriptive in nature, asking the learner to record factual features of the incident they are writing about, while later questions may be more probing about the learner's own responses and reactions to the incident, requiring them to reflect on the specific competences that they activated and used in the situation.

A limitation of journals and structured autobiographical reflections as a method of assessment is that they are vulnerable to socially desirable responding. In other words, learners might only record content that they think will be viewed favourably by an assessor, and suppress incidents, experiences and reflections that do not show them in a positive light. For this reason, journals and autobiographical reflections are most suitable for self-assessment for low-stakes formative, diagnostic and monitoring purposes. When the assessments are to be carried out by someone other than the learner, ensuring satisfactory validity can be a challenge. Furthermore, because of the amount of work that is involved for a teacher to read and assess a journal, reliability can also be problematic. In cases where journals and autobiographical reflections are used for summative purposes by assessors other than the learner, appropriate steps should be taken to ensure good reliability, such as using two or more independent assessors or a senior experienced colleague to moderate the outcomes of the assessment. Nevertheless, the problem concerning validity remains, and it is likely that the assessment outcomes will be biased in a positive direction by the suppression of information about incidents and experiences in which the learner exhibited less proficient behaviours.

Depending on how they are used, reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections can help to promote the development of learners' competences, especially their knowledge and critical understanding of themselves and of the experiences they have had. In addition, they help to create highly reflective learners, by encouraging and supporting them to think in depth about their own experiences, their learning processes and their personal development.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

Reflective journals that have little or minimal structure are most suitable for use by learners in secondary and higher education. However, journals that provide a structure for the learners' reports and reflections can be used with older children in primary education. A highly structured format such as that provided by autobiographies can be used with learners as young as 5 years of age. With such young learners, who have not yet acquired the necessary literacy skills to write their own narratives and reflections, the questions can be asked by the teacher through an oral interview, with answers being recorded either as an audio recording or in a written format by the teacher.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

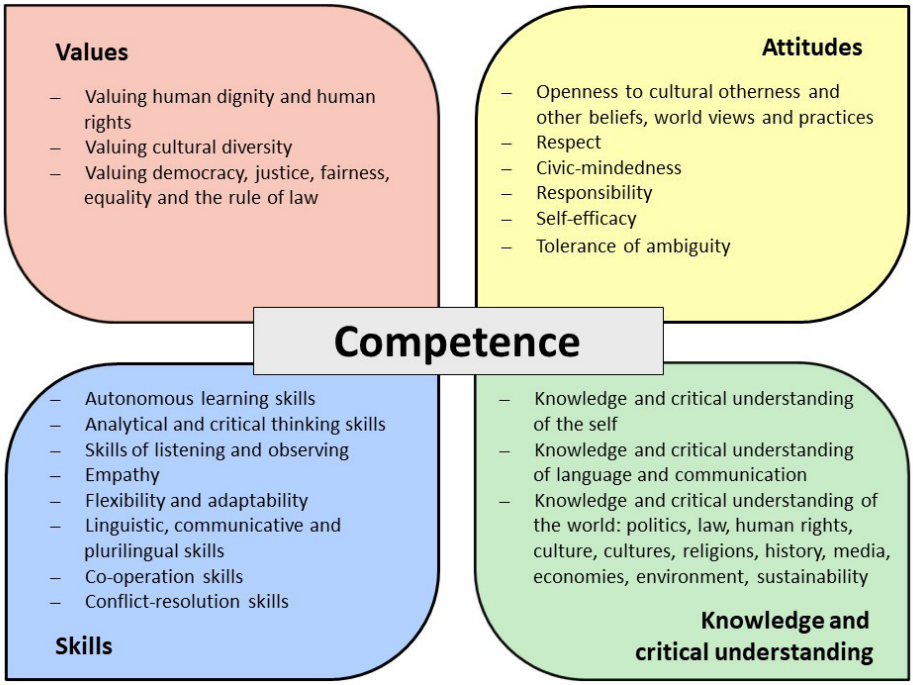
This method is most suitable for self-assessment, although assessments of journals and autobiographies can also be made by teachers and peers. Co-assessment can also be used.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

Reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections can be used for low-stakes formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes. They can also be used for high-stakes summative purposes, as long as suitable precautions for ensuring high reliability and high validity are taken.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method



Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

Due to the amount of work that is required for a teacher to read and assess a journal, which can require maintaining attention to detail for a substantial period of time, achieving a high level of reliability can be challenging when using this method. However, the following strategies can all be employed to enhance reliability: using a rubric to guide assessments, providing training in the assessment of reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections for teachers, using two independent trained assessors who subsequently compare and discuss their assessments, and using a senior colleague to moderate the outcomes of the assessments.

Validity

Because of the problem of socially desirable responding, where the learner only includes content that they think will be viewed favourably by an assessor, this method is most suitable for self-assessment. When the assessments are to be carried out by someone other than the learner, it is likely that the assessment outcomes will be biased in a positive direction by the learner suppressing evidence and reflections that might be interpreted negatively by the assessor. In the case of written reflections, validity may also be compromised if the learners have poor literacy skills. With younger learners, the potential for limited literacy skills to undermine the validity of the assessment can be overcome by collecting entries through oral interviews between the teacher and the learner (which can then be audio or video recorded for inclusion in the journal).

Equity

If the method is used for low-stakes self-assessment only, equity is high. However, if an assessor other than the learner conducts the assessment, all learners should have a level of literacy that is sufficient for the method in the format in which it is administered. If some learners lack the necessary literacy skills, those individuals are likely to be disadvantaged in the assessment. Equity may also be compromised if the language in which the journal or autobiographical reflections are written is not the learner's first language.

Respectfulness

Because the evidence that is produced for the assessment is under the control of the learners themselves (and indeed, precisely because they can suppress the inclusion of information that they do not wish to divulge or that is less favourable to themselves), the method is high in respectfulness. Respectfulness is highest of all when the contents of the journal or autobiography are private and confidential to the learner.

Transparency

If learners are given the assessment rubric at the outset, if they receive clear guidelines on the types of journal entries that are required, and if they are given annotated examples of the types of entries that they are expected to produce, transparency is high.

Practicality

If the teacher conducts the assessment, this is a time-consuming assessment method to use. However, if the method is used for self-assessment by the learners themselves, it is relatively easy to administer – the main workload for the teacher is to explain the expectations clearly at the outset, and possibly to monitor the quality of the entries as the journal is being produced. However, if the method is used with younger learners, administering the method through oral interviews can be time-consuming.

Concrete example of how the method is currently used

An example from the United Kingdom

On a master's level programme in Developmental Psychology, learners could opt to take a course on Children, Race, Ethnicity and Nation, in which the role of education in promoting children's intercultural competence was covered. A workshop was run as part of this course in which the learners completed the Council of Europe's Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (AIE) , which is available from www.coe.int/autobiography.

The AIE is a tool that helps learners to engage in structured reflections and to think critically about a specific intercultural encounter that they have experienced. An intercultural encounter is an encounter with somebody who they perceive as having a different cultural affiliation from themselves. The person may be from any kind of cultural group: people from another country, another ethnic group, another religion, another region of the same country or from another level, class or stratum of the same society. The AIE is completed in connection with one specific encounter, and each encounter therefore needs a new copy of the AIE.

The AIE consists of a series of questions which the learner answers about the specific encounter that they have chosen to analyse. The encounter might be a relatively profound one that led to an awakening of their awareness of cultural difference. Some of the more complex questions in the AIE are designed with this possibility in mind. Other learners may choose a much more mundane experience (such as buying a loaf of bread in a shop in a foreign country, or an occasion on which a foreigner asked them for directions in the street). With the latter type of experience, some questions in the AIE may be redundant and can simply be omitted if they are not relevant.

The structure of the AIE – that is, the particular questions and the order in which they are asked – is based on a theoretical model of intercultural competence. According to this model, intercultural competence consists of a number of identifiable components – it should be noted that all of the components in the model are included as individual competences in the RFCDC. Users of the AIE are encouraged to think analytically and critically about their thoughts, feelings and behaviours in the encounter in relationship to these specific components. The AIE therefore lends itself readily to supporting and encouraging a learner's critical reflections on those particular competences in the RFCDC that together comprise intercultural competence.

The AIE can be used by learners formally in the classroom, under the guidance of the teacher. It can also be used informally and privately at a time and place of learners' own choosing, as a kind of diary, which may remain confidential to the learner.

There are two versions of the AIE. The first is for younger learners aged from 5 up to about 10-12 years, where the language has been simplified, some complex issues have been omitted, and the questions can be asked using a one-to-one interview that can be audio recorded. The second is a standard version for older learners aged 10-12 years or older, which is completed using written text (either handwritten or written on a computer). The decision about which version to offer to learners who are in the age range 10-12 years is a matter for the teacher's judgment.

The AIE is structured into eight sections, containing questions designed to support and promote the learner in:

1. describing the intercultural encounter;
2. describing the other person or people involved;
3. describing their own thoughts and feelings in the encounter;
4. describing the other person's thoughts and feelings in the encounter;
5. analysing the similarities and differences between themselves and the other person;
6. analysing how they spoke to or communicated with the other person;
7. identifying ways in which they could find out more about things they did not understand at the time of the encounter;
8. critically evaluating their own responses in the encounter, reflecting on whether and how the experience changed them, and reflecting on the things they might do as a result of the encounter and as a result of completing the AIE.

As this structure indicates, the easier descriptive questions appear first, with more analytical questions appearing in the middle of the AIE, and questions requiring critical evaluation and deeper reflection appearing at the end. This sequence is designed to gradually and progressively scaffold, support and deepen the learner's reflections.

The learners on the master's course were asked to complete the AIE on only a single occasion during the workshop, in order to self-assess their own intercultural competence. The feedback received was that the exercise was immensely useful in enabling them to obtain an understanding of their own intercultural competence, and that the AIE was very enjoyable and stimulating to complete. Furthermore, some of the learners in each year in which the workshop was run indicated that they would continue to use the tool in the future as a private self-assessment tool when they experienced a particularly challenging or perplexing intercultural encounter.

In addition to the AIE, the Council of Europe has developed a second parallel tool called Images of Others – An Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media (AIEVM). This can also be used in primary, secondary and higher education. The AIEVM is designed to support the learners' critical reflections on images of cultural "others" that are encountered in visual media such as television, cinema, the internet, magazines, newspapers. A third tool, the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through the Internet (AIETI), has also been designed to support learners to critically reflect on intercultural encounters that occur through social media/social networking sites.

12. Portfolios and e-portfolios

General characterisation and description of the method

A portfolio is a systematic, cumulative and ongoing collection of materials that is produced by the learner over a period of time as evidence of his or her learning, progress, performance, efforts, achievements and proficiency. Crucially, a portfolio also needs to contain the learner's critical reflections on the evidence that is included within the portfolio. A portfolio provides an overview of the progress that the learner has made during the period of time in which it has been compiled, and helps the learner to organise their evidence of learning and their critical reflections to illustrate and explain how their proficiency has developed over time.

Portfolios can be tailored to the needs of particular learners, levels of education, education programmes and education contexts. They can be more or less substantial, depending on the time period over which the contents are compiled and the range and scope of the learning that is documented within the portfolio. For example, a portfolio can be used to capture evidence of learning and reflections on learning across an individual learner's entire educational career, across a single school year, a single programme of learning, or a single activity or project that takes place within a programme of learning.

A major advantage of using a portfolio for assessment purposes is that it enables the learner to provide evidence (e.g. through written accounts, photographs, drawings, audio recordings, video recordings) of how they have used their competences in real-world contexts beyond the school. The critical reflections can then be used to synthesise and interpret these materials in a way that demonstrates and elucidates the learner's engagement with the learning process.

Importantly, a portfolio can contain the outputs of both formal and informal assessments of their competences that have been made by all of the other assessment methods described in this book. In this sense, portfolios could be viewed as the most comprehensive and all-encompassing assessment method that may be used in relationship to the RFCDC.

The materials that are compiled in a portfolio should be selected by the learner following a set of guidelines provided by the teacher. These guidelines should specify the competences that are being assessed, as well as the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for which the portfolio entries need to provide evidence. They may also specify the range of contexts from which the portfolio contents should be derived. In addition, the guidelines might specify that the portfolio entries should contain particular types of evidence. For use in relationship to the RFCDC, the guidelines should be constructed to ensure that learners provide evidence of the mobilisation, application and flexible adjustment of competences across a range of contexts and situations beyond the school, if the learner's proficiency (rather than achievement) is being assessed through the portfolio.

It is important for the guidelines to also include information about the breadth and depth of the evidence that needs to be compiled in the portfolio, the amount of detail that is required in descriptions of events and activities in which the learner

has participated, and the writing style that should be used for entries in the portfolio. It may also be helpful for learners to be given, before they begin to compile their portfolios, examples of the types of entries that they are expected to produce – these examples may be annotated to highlight the key features that are required. To ensure that learners are on the right track, the teacher may periodically examine learners' portfolios as they are being compiled, to check that the style is appropriate and that the critical reflections are being written in sufficient depth. In doing so, teachers can also provide learners with formative feedback, identify problems and make suggestions for changes to the contents of their portfolios.

Portfolios can be produced in traditional hard copy (e.g. using binders, folders or box files), but they can also be implemented digitally as e-portfolios. Digital implementation has several advantages:

- it helps to overcome the storage problems that are associated with hard copy portfolios;
- it helps to motivate and engage learners;
- it allows learners to be highly creative in how they compile, organise and cross-reference the contents of their portfolios;
- it facilitates the collection and storage of videos, audio recordings and images;
- it allows the portfolio to be easily expanded;
- it helps to foster learners' digital skills;
- it allows the learner easy access to the portfolio and enables them to work on the portfolio from any location and at any time;
- it allows both learners and teachers to access the portfolio even if they cannot be in the same location at the same time, for whatever reason, and can therefore facilitate communication between learners and their teachers about the portfolio;
- it allows the wider sharing of contents with other people, if this is desired for any reason.

However, there are also some disadvantages associated with e-portfolios:

- some learners may not have sufficient technical expertise to use an e-portfolio;
- some teachers may not have sufficient technical expertise to support learners in compiling an e-portfolio;
- some learners may collect far too much evidence, without sufficient structure or reflection, because of the ease with which this can be done digitally;
- some schools may not have sufficient ICT to support e-portfolios.

That said, the advantages of e-portfolios should not be underestimated, because their additional functionality allows learners to be far more creative in documenting and reflecting on the progress of their learning. Furthermore, given the increasing use of digital technologies in education, the fact that e-portfolios enable both learners and teachers to access the portfolio contents independently of location and time is a further very considerable advantage.

As in the case of reflective journals, portfolios (irrespective of whether they are implemented in hard copy or digital format) can be used solely for self-assessment,

and can contain private documents that are confidential to the learner, with the teacher or peers only having access to those contents that they are invited to view by the learner. Alternatively, the teacher may act as a mentor, regularly reading and discussing the contents of the portfolio with the learner as they are being compiled. A third possibility is that the teacher encourages pairs of learners to act as mentors for each other's portfolios.

A fourth possibility is that the teacher formally assesses the contents of the portfolio using rubrics in order to derive a set of descriptive profiles of the learner's proficiency in the use of his or her competences, either at a time when work on the portfolio has been completed, at a time when a particular programme of learning has come to an end, at the end of a school year, or at a time when the learner is about to transition to a new level of education. If the portfolio is assessed in this way for a summative purpose, the learner should be informed about this in advance, and should be given the assessment rubric as part of the portfolio guidelines. Clearly, assessing a portfolio for a summative purpose is extremely time-consuming. Also, because of the complexity and scale of the contents of portfolios, assessment can be challenging, with the result that reliability may be low. Ideally, summative assessments of portfolios should only be conducted by teachers who have been specifically trained in assessing portfolios. Reliability can be further enhanced by using two independent trained assessors who subsequently compare and discuss their assessments, or by using a senior colleague to moderate the outcomes of the assessments.

If portfolios are used for summative assessment purposes, it is important to be aware that their validity may be undermined by social desirability effects. In other words, learners can easily select or change the contents of their portfolios to ensure that they only contain evidence and critical reflections that they think will be viewed favourably by an assessor.

There are several notable advantages to using portfolios for assessment purposes in relationship to the RFCDC:

- they help learners to demonstrate their proficiency while simultaneously providing the scaffolding that can facilitate their further development;
- they encourage learners to reflect critically on their own performance;
- they allow learners to proceed at their own pace;
- they can help learners to document the development of their competences as they are applied, adjusted and adapted in a variety of contexts inside and outside the classroom or school;
- they enable learners themselves to take ownership of the assessment materials;
- they can be used for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative assessment purposes.

In short, portfolios fulfil a significant pedagogical purpose as well as providing a means of assessing the learner's competences. They are an ideal method for fostering reflective learners who have a clear understanding of their own learning processes and of the progress they have made in their learning and their personal development.

Age of the learners who can be assessed using the method

Portfolios may be used to assess learners of any age, including pre-school children. However, younger learners require support in compiling their portfolios, with the contents effectively being co-constructed by the child and the teacher working together. Older learners can work independently on their portfolios if they are given appropriate information in the portfolio guidelines. The Council of Europe has developed two portfolios for use specifically in relationship to the RFCDC: one for learners from the age of 3 up to approximately 10-11 years, and one for learners from approximately 10-11 years of age upwards.

Who can conduct the assessment using the method?

The contents of portfolios can be assessed by learners themselves, by teachers and by peers, and can also be co-assessed.

The educational purposes for which the method can be used

Portfolios can be used for low-stakes formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes. They can also be used for high-stakes summative purposes, as long as suitable actions for ensuring high reliability and high validity are taken.

The specific competences that can be assessed by the use of the method

All 20 competences may be assessed using this method

Values

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

Attitudes

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

Competence

Skills

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

Knowledge and critical understanding

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

Summary judgments of the reliability, validity, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the method

Reliability

Reliability in assessing portfolios can be problematic, due to the complexity and the magnitude of the contents of portfolios. However, all of the following actions can be taken to enhance reliability: using rubrics to guide assessments, providing training in the assessment of portfolios for teachers, using two independent trained assessors who subsequently compare and discuss their assessments, and using a senior colleague to moderate the outcomes of the assessments. All of these actions are essential if portfolios are used for high-stakes purposes.

Validity

The validity of portfolios is likely to be compromised by social desirability effects, with learners only including content that they think will be viewed favourably by an assessor. For this reason, portfolios are most suitable for self-assessment. When the assessments are to be carried out by someone other than the learner, it is likely that the assessment outcomes will be biased in a positive direction by the learner suppressing evidence and reflections that might be interpreted negatively by the assessor. Otherwise, validity is likely to be high, because portfolios can be used to compile evidence from a wide range of real-world contexts both within and beyond the school, and the assessment outcomes are therefore likely to be realistic indicators of the learner's proficiency in using his or her competences in those kinds of settings. In the case of younger learners, the potential for limited literacy skills undermining the validity of the assessment can be overcome by collecting evidence and reflections through oral interviews between the teacher and the learner (which can be audio- or video-recorded for inclusion in the portfolio).

Equity

Learners with dedicated parents who assist them in compiling the contents of their portfolios can be unfairly advantaged in compiling their portfolio. By contrast, learners with literacy difficulties are likely to be unfairly disadvantaged if the portfolio entries rely heavily on written texts. On the other hand, the possibility to return to entries in order to amend and revise them over time, especially if the teacher provides feedback on those entries, and the possibility for entries to be produced not only in written but also digital, visual, audio and video formats, means that equity may not be compromised to the same extent as it might be with other assessment methods that rely solely on written text. However, equity may be compromised if the language in which the portfolio contents are written is not the learner's first language.

Respectfulness

Because the learner controls and has ownership of the contents of the portfolio (and can suppress the inclusion of information that they do not wish to divulge or that is less favourable to themselves), the method is high in respectfulness. Respectfulness

is highest of all when the contents of the portfolio are private and confidential to the learner, and when the learner has the option to withhold some or all of the contents of the portfolio from other people.

Transparency

If learners are given the assessment rubric at the outset, receive clear guidelines on the types of material to include in their portfolios, and are given annotated examples of the types of entries that they are expected to include, transparency is high.

Practicality

The amount of support and monitoring that is required by individual learners can be very time-consuming for the teacher. An optimal process is for a team of teachers within the school to support the portfolio process.

Concrete examples of how the method is currently used

An example from Andorra

An e-portfolio is used on the three-year teacher-education programme run by the University of Andorra. This programme prepares teachers to teach the new Andorran school curriculum, which was revised in 2018 in order to implement the RFCDC in whole. The e-portfolio is used as a repository for the work that students conduct on the programme.

Each semester of the programme is divided into two modules, and each module offers a different challenge to the students. Module 1, for example, is related to a teacher's role, and students have to argue whether a robot could replace a teacher or not. In Module 4, students have to develop their storytelling skills as a means to teach and learn English. Throughout each module, students have to submit reflective journals and conduct class debates, in order to respond to the challenge that is presented by the module. This approach allows the trainers to continually assess and guide students before they have to hand in their final responses to the challenge. Assessments are made at three time points during the course of each module, and these provide the student with evidence about their achievement so far. Students have immediate access to the results of the assessments as these are shared with each student online as a document. The students therefore receive continual formative, diagnostic and monitoring feedback. The work that has to be submitted at the end of each module consists of an oral presentation and a paper on a topic such as "Could robots replace teachers in primary schools?" or "How can you, as a future teacher, explain scientific experiments to young students?"

A second layer of assessment focuses on specific descriptors that are drawn directly from the RFCDC. The trainers have identified the descriptors that can be assessed in each module's seminars. The expectation is that, by the end of the three-year curriculum, each student will have been assessed using each descriptor at least twice, most probably three times. This requires close supervision and the accurate gathering of evidence showing that the student has acquired the necessary level of proficiency.

An important feature of the assessment is that students themselves participate in the assessment process. In the Teamwork seminar, students are asked to fill out a self- and peer-assessment grid in some of the sessions in which they have worked in teams. The grid requires them to assess the quality of their team's contribution, focus on task and interaction, and the quality of their own participation, role and interaction. They also have to reflect on how effective the work was, what worked well, and what needs to be improved in terms of members' responsibility, participation, and time spent on achieving the defined goals.

All of the assessment materials are gathered together in the student's e-portfolio.

An example from Norway

In Norway, portfolio assessment is used for assessing writing skills in mother-tongue education in secondary school, and for second-language education at advanced levels. For upper secondary education, the method can also be used for social sciences and citizenship studies.

For assessing writing skills, the method is introduced to learners at the very beginning of the course. During this introduction, they are introduced to the process, the expected learning outcomes, and the assessment criteria that will be used to assess their portfolios. The teacher emphasises that only the finished written work will form a part of their summative assessment.

During the first four to six weeks, learners work on one writing task, using a genre that is likely to be relevant and interesting for learners of that age. Learners may collaborate with peers to explore the nature of the genre and to brainstorm about topics that can be expressed through the genre. After writing the text, it is assessed by the teacher, who provides formative feedback with key questions to help the learner improve the quality by reflecting on his or her own writing skills. This feedback is the most important information for the learner to receive during the writing process. In classes where there is a supportive learning culture, learners can also work with peers after they have received their feedback from the teacher, which can help learners to reflect on their feedback further and identify strategies for improving their texts. The learner is then allowed two hours to improve the text, before a new writing task is introduced.

For learners who are 13-15 years old, the genre may be a letter to the editor, a letter to the headmaster, a speech for the confirmation party, a sports report, a music review, an analysis of a football match, a game review, a book review or a review of social media. Any genre may be used that connects learners' personal lives and personal reflections to school work. This helps learners to feel confident in expressing themselves, and it also provides them with an opportunity to reflect on their own lives and the spaces that they have to influence their surroundings. The genre is introduced to the learner at the beginning of the writing phase, together with genre keys and good examples, and the learner is encouraged to imagine the reader of the text. To enable the learner to cope with the writing task, and the teacher to cope with the assessment and supervision, texts may be kept short, as long as they are in line with the genre and the aim of the text. In some cases, the texts can be sent to their intended audience, for example, letters to an editor can be sent to the

local newspaper, where they may be published, which encourages learners to read the newspaper and to write their letters.

When the next writing task and genre is introduced, the same period of four to six weeks is used, following the same procedures. When the learners have created four texts, they are asked to select three of them to be placed in the portfolio and assessed for a summative purpose, and in addition they are asked to write a short reflection text of about 500-750 words in length. The reflection text has to explain why these three texts were selected, and it also has to describe the process that led to their production. In addition, the learners are asked to discuss the main challenges they faced in producing the texts, how these challenges were addressed, what the most interesting parts of the process were, and whether there were any aspects of the writing process that the learner is especially proud of. The final portfolio, including this reflective text, is then assessed by the teacher using the assessment criteria that were described and explained to the learners at the very outset of the process.

An example from Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, an e-portfolio covers the whole duration of a learner's education, and contains both personal and publicly accessible information that is collected throughout the full lifespan of education from pre-school through to graduation. The e-portfolio can act as a prerequisite for access to higher education. The e-portfolio allows the integration of e-learning systems that include a variety of different types of assessments and examinations, and is flexible in the way in which it can be used by different teachers according to school subject, the learner involved and the teaching materials. It can include the results of text-based assessments (e.g. essays, reflective reports), project-based reports, multiple-choice tests, and so on, which may be in multi-media formats due to the electronic nature of the portfolio. The contents can be accessed from any location because they are stored online. The final overall assessment can consist of a collection of multiple outcomes linked to particular time frames that are set up in different ways. Decisions about how to assess particular areas of work depend on the specific subject area, and are made by school principals and teachers.

The steps that are taken to compile the e-portfolio form a cycle. This cycle involves the collection of evidence of performance, reflection on that evidence, organising the evidence and reflections, receiving feedback on the materials, revising the materials in the light of the feedback, assessment of the materials, discussing and sharing outcomes with others, before then collecting further evidence of performance, with the cyclical process being repeated.

The e-portfolio provides a bank of evidence about the learner's participation in the education process and about his or her personalised journey of self-exploration and development, and serves to document the learner's capacities and abilities. In addition, it enables the learner to engage in a more profound and meaningful interaction with the materials that have been collected in the portfolio through a process of review and reflection. The e-portfolio also allows the badging of the learner's competences that can be shared with potential employers.

An example from Ireland

In Ireland, classroom-based assessments (CBAs) are used in the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) 100-hours short course. This is an optional course within an obligatory Wellbeing area of learning in the Junior Cycle, which covers the first three years of post-primary education from the ages of 12 to 15 years. Within the Wellbeing framework, there are three optional short courses: Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education (PE).

CBAs constitute one of the formal assessment points in the Junior Cycle. Individual key skills and statements of learning are not discretely assessed. They are instead assessed in the context of an activity in which they are clustered. CBAs contribute to and build on the use of formative assessment in the classroom, and happen during normal class time. They resemble the learning that normally happens on a daily basis. They are intended to capture the knowledge and skills that are not easily assessed in a timed pen-and-paper type examination, and are conducted at a common level by the class teacher. There is one CBA undertaken in the second or third year of the CSPE course, depending on how it is timetabled. CBAs can be used for formative, diagnostic, monitoring and summative purposes, and can capture clusters of competences within the context of the RFCDC.

Learners complete at least three citizenship actions as part of their learning across the three strands of the CSPE course. Teachers initially provide support and guidance to the class group, and subsequently provide individual encouragement within the classroom setting. Learners create an Action Record from one of the three citizenship actions for their CBA. Learners may undertake group actions. This is important in CSPE, where learners are learning the potential power of working with others to bring about change. However, each learner must create an individual Citizenship Action Record, and the learner's individual role and contribution to the work forms the focus of the CBA. A Citizenship Action Record shows how a learner has actively engaged in an issue or topic of interest, and captures both evidence of the action undertaken and the learner's reflections on the evidence and action. In this sense, the Citizenship Action Record functions as a mini-portfolio.

The Citizenship Action Record needs to convey how the learner personally engaged in a citizenship action of interest to him or her, and what has been learnt from the experience. It is important that learners do not view the production of the Citizenship Action Record as something that happens after the action has taken place. As they plan, research and implement their citizenship action, they need to capture evidence of each step along the way (using photos, video, scrapbook, OneNote or similar). This evidence is used to show how they personally engaged in the action, and forms a vital part of their record.

Learners have choice in how they present their Citizenship Action Record. It can be produced in written, digital, visual and/or audio formats, and it may be supported through the use of an interview or presentation.

Assessment takes place through Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings that enable teachers to collaboratively reach consistency in their judgments of learners' work against common, externally set Features of Quality. This helps to

ensure the reliability, validity, equity and respectfulness of the assessment. A SLAR meeting takes place after each CBA. Here, teachers share and discuss samples of their assessments of the learners' work and build a common understanding about the quality of the learning exhibited by the learners.

For full details of the assessment of Civic, Social and Political Education, see: https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/85185792-37f3-4249-be55-a0525aa850f8/CSPE_AssessmentGuidelines_Feb2017.pdf.

The Council of Europe Portfolio of Competences for Democratic Culture

The Council of Europe Portfolio of Competences for Democratic Culture provides a comprehensive means of implementing the RFCDC and assessing learners' proficiency in the use of the 20 competences. Learners use the portfolio to store and organise evidence and documentation that reveals how their proficiency in the use of the 20 competences is developing. It also provides learners with a tool for reflecting on this evidence, on their competences, and on how they will further develop their competences in the future. The portfolio can be used for formative, diagnostic, monitoring or summative assessment purposes.

There are two versions of the portfolio, one for younger learners from the age of 3 to approximately 10-11 years, and one for older learners (called the "standard" version) from approximately 10-11 years of age upwards. In both cases, the portfolio is used to store and organise evidence of developments and advances (and regressions, where these occur) in the learner's democratic and intercultural competences and behaviour over time and across situations, both within and beyond the classroom.

The younger learners' version of the portfolio needs to be co-constructed by the learner and the teacher working together towards the goal of promoting and supporting learning and reflection in the child. The contents can be developed in many different ways, respecting learners' preferred ways of expressing themselves – for example, the portfolio can include audio- and video-recordings, drawings, photographs and written texts. The younger learners' version, when completed, contains the following eight sections:

1. title page;
2. contents list;
3. personal statement;
4. context statement;
5. statement of purpose;
6. evidence of developing competences;
7. reflections;
8. concluding statement.

The teacher's guide to the younger learners' version offers many concrete suggestions for how the contents of the different sections of the portfolio may be generated by the teacher and the learner working together.

The standard version of the portfolio, which is compiled in a more independent manner by the learner (but where necessary with teacher support and guidance), contains the following eight sections instead:

1. title page;
2. contents list;
3. statement of purpose;
4. personal statement;
5. a collection of descriptions, documents, reflections, charts and record sheets that document the learner's performance, learning progressions, achievements and proficiency in the use of competences across a wide range of contexts within and beyond the classroom;
6. logbook of further reflections on a wider range of experiences inside and outside the school – some sections of the logbook can remain private, others open only to teachers and/or parents, and others completely open;
7. a general reflections section, which reviews experiences and changes over a longer period of time, for example, a school term or a school year;
8. summary list of the competences that have been demonstrated throughout the portfolio.

Any documentation that may be available on the learners' competences from assessments using other assessment methods can be included in the evidence sections of either portfolio, and may be used by the learner as a basis for reflecting on his or her own progress. The portfolios can be used by learners in integrated teaching, a single subject, or multiple subjects where teachers collaborate to help learners to document their learning experiences across the curriculum and to draw connections among different experiences. They can also be implemented either in traditional hard copy or digitally as an e-portfolio.

Assessments of the contents of the portfolio can be made for formative, diagnostic, monitoring or summative purposes. Assessments should ideally be based on observations of behaviours that take place over a reasonable period of time and in several different contexts. Assessments can be carried out by learners themselves, by the teacher, or possibly by peers. In the case of the standard version, the choice will depend on the degree of confidentiality of certain parts of the portfolio, particularly the logbook. Because education systems and schools differ from country to country or region to region, it is possible that assessment by the teacher is not always necessary, with only learner self-assessment being required. Assessments should involve both the evidence and the reflections that are contained in the portfolio, and be based on the RFCDC descriptors. The portfolio contents can then be used to assess progressions in the learner's proficiency in using his or her competences over time. Crucially, assessments should examine the degree to which the learner has provided evidence for all or only some of the competences, and to which levels of proficiency (as specified by the descriptors). Because the learner's reflections in the portfolio

should provide self-assessments, when the teacher conducts the assessment, he or she can also compare the learner's self-assessments with the teacher's own understanding of the learner's progress in developing competences.

Both versions of the portfolio have been designed on the basis of a set of core principles, which are explained in detail in the guidance notes for teachers. These principles include all of the following:

- the portfolio may be used for teaching, learning and assessment purposes;
- based on the right to respect for private and family life, learners have the right to withhold any materials that they do not wish to disclose through the portfolio;
- the portfolio should be based explicitly on the competences that are specified by the RFCDC;
- the portfolio should record evidence concerning the dynamic, fluid and adaptive mobilisation and deployment of clusters of competences within specific situations;
- the RFCDC descriptors should be used as learning outcomes;
- the materials that are compiled in the portfolio should focus not only on the development of the learner's skills, knowledge and critical understanding, but also on the development of his or her values and attitudes;
- the evidence that is compiled in the portfolio should be derived from multiple sources;
- the portfolio should document the development of the learner's proficiency, and the changes in the learner's behaviour that have occurred over time across varieties of situations and contexts;
- the portfolio should contain evidence about both proficiency and achievement;
- the portfolio should document the efforts that the learner has made to develop proficiency;
- the portfolio should document obstacles that the learner has faced in the use of competences;
- the materials that are compiled in the portfolio may be provided in multiple formats;
- the portfolio should facilitate and stimulate the learner's critical reflections on his or her competences;
- the portfolio may be used within a single-subject, integrated or cross-curricular approach to citizenship education;
- the portfolio may be used within a whole-school approach.

As can be seen from this list of principles, the Council of Europe portfolio offers users a comprehensive tool that has been designed and tailored specifically for the purpose of assessing learners' competences for democratic culture.

For further information about the Council of Europe portfolio, see: www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/portfolios.

Further reading

Entries in this list marked with ** provide more accessible and less technical readings on some of the topics that have been covered in this book.

American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association and National Council on Measurement in Education (2014), *Standards for educational and psychological testing*, American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC.

Balloo K., Evans C., Hughes A., Zhu X. and Winstone N. (2018), "Transparency isn't spoon-feeding: how a transformative approach to the use of explicit assessment criteria can support student self-regulation", *Frontiers in Education*, Vol. 3, pp. 1-11, doi: 10.3389/feduc.2018.00069.

Black P. (1998), *Testing: friend or foe? The theory and practice of assessment and testing*, Falmer Press, London.

Black P., Harrison C., Lee C., Marshall B. and Wiliam D. (2003), *Assessment for learning: putting it into practice*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Black P. and Wiliam D. (1998), "Assessment and classroom learning", *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 7-74.

Black P. and Wiliam D. (2003), "'In praise of educational research': formative assessment", *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp. 623-37.

** Borghetti C. (2013), "Considerations on dynamic assessment of intercultural competence", *TEASIG conference proceedings, Siena, 2013*, pp. 17-20, available at www.academia.edu/12648052/Considerations_on_dynamic_assessment_of_intercultural_competence, accessed 24 January 2021.

** Brookhart S. M. (2013), *How to create and use rubrics for formative assessment and grading*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA.

Brown G. T. L. and Harris L. R. (2013), "Student self-assessment", in McMillan J. H. (ed.), *The Sage handbook of research on classroom assessment*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Brown G. T. L. and Harris L. R. (2014), "The future of self-assessment in classroom practice: reframing self-assessment as a core competency", *Frontline Learning Research*, Vol. 3, pp. 22-30.

** Cain M., Edwards-Henry A-M. and Rampersad J. (2005), *Developing portfolios for integrating teaching, learning, and assessment*, School of Education, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, available at https://eportfoliogr.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/0/4/21044446/technical_report2.pdf, accessed 24 January 2021.

Calfee R. C. and Masuda W. V. (1997), "Classroom assessment as inquiry", in Phye G. D. (ed.), *Handbook of classroom assessment: learning, adjustment, and achievement*, Academic Press, New York.

Cotrus A. and Stanciu C. (2014), "A study on dynamic assessment techniques, as a method of obtaining a high level of learning potential, untapped by conventional assessment", *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 116, pp. 2616-19.

DeNeve K. and Heppner M. (1997), "Role play simulations: the assessment of an active learning technique and comparisons with traditional lectures", *Innovative Higher Education*, Vol. 21, pp. 231-46.

Dunbar S. B., Koretz D. M. and Hoover H. D. (1991), "Quality control in the development and use of performance assessments", *Applied Measurement in Education*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 289-303.

** Dunn L., Morgan C., O'Reilly M. and Parry S. (2004), *The student assessment handbook: new directions in traditional and online assessment*, Routledge, London.

Harlen W. (2005), "Trusting teachers' judgement: research evidence of the reliability and validity of teachers' assessment used for summative purposes", *Research Papers in Education*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 245-70.

Harsch C. and Poehner M.E. (2016), "Enhancing learner experiences abroad: the potential of dynamic assessment to develop learner interculturality", *Language and Intercultural Communication*, Vol. 16, pp. 470-90.

Hattie J. and Timperley H. (2007), "The power of feedback", *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 77, pp. 81-112.

** Hounsell D. (1995), "Marking and commenting on essays", in Forster F., Hounsell D. and Thompson S. (eds), *Tutoring and demonstrating: a handbook*, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, available at www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/iad/Learning_teaching/Tutors/Handbook/Tutors-Chapter6.pdf, accessed 24 January 2021.

** Isaacs T., Zara C. and Herbert G. (2013), *Key concepts in educational assessment*, Sage, London.

Koretz D. (2008), *Measuring up: what educational testing really tells us*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Lamprianou I. and Athanasou J. A. (2009), *A teacher's guide to educational assessment* (rev. edn), Sense Publishers, Rotterdam.

** McMillan J. H. (2000), "Fundamental assessment principles for teachers and school administrators", *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, Vol. 7, pp. 2000-01, available at https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1091&context=pare, accessed 24 January 2021.

** Maxwell G. S. (2001), *Teacher observation in student assessment*, Queensland School Curriculum Council, Brisbane, available at www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/publications/research_qscc_assess_report_4.pdf, accessed 24 January 2021.

** Newton P. E. (2007), "Clarifying the purposes of educational assessment", *Assessment in Education*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 149-70.

Newton P. E. (2010), "Educational assessment – concepts and issues: the multiple purposes of assessment", *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd edn), Elsevier, Oxford.

OECD (2013), *Synergies for better learning: an international perspective on evaluation and assessment*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Oulton C., Day V., Dillon J. and Grace M. (2004), "Controversial issues – teachers' attitudes and practices in the context of citizenship education", *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 489-507.

Panadero E. and Jonsson A. (2013), "The use of scoring rubrics for formative assessment purposes revisited: a review", *Educational Research Review*, Vol. 9, pp. 129-44.

Pellegrino J. W., Chudowsky N. and Glaser R. (eds) (2001), *Knowing what students know: the science and design of educational assessment*, National Academy Press, Washington, DC.

Pepper D. (2013), *KeyCoNet 2013 literature review: assessment for key competences*, KeyCoNet, available at http://keyconet.eun.org/c/document_library/get_file?groupId=11028&uuid=b1475317-108c-4cf5-a650-dae772a7d943, accessed 24 January 2021.

Siarova H., Sternadel D. and Mašidlauskaitė R. (2017), *Assessment practices for 21st century learning: review of evidence*, NESET II report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Spratt M. (2005), "Washback and the classroom: the implications for teaching and learning of studies of washback from exams", *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 9, pp. 5-29.

Stobart G. (2008), *Testing times: the uses and abuses of assessment*, Routledge, Abingdon.

Swaffield S. (ed.) (2008), *Unlocking assessment: understanding for reflection and application*, Routledge, London.

** Topping K. J. (2009), "Peer assessment", *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 20-27.

Van den Bergh V., Mortelmans D., Spooren P., Van Petegem P., Gijbels D. and Vanthournout G. (2006), "New assessment modes within project-based education – The stakeholders", *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, Vol. 32, pp. 345-68.

Wall D. (1997), "Impact and washback in language testing", in Clapham C. and Corson D. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of language and education, 7: Language testing and assessment*, Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht, pp. 291-302.

** Wiliam D. (2020), "How to think about assessment", in Donarski S. (ed.), *The researchED guide to assessment,* John Catt Educational, Woodbridge.

Wiliam D. and Black P. (1996), "Meanings and consequences: a basis for distinguishing formative and summative functions of assessment?", *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 22, pp. 537-48.

** Wride M. (2017), *Guide to self-assessment*, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, available at www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/resources/assessment/selfassessment.php, accessed 24 January 2021.

Appendix

A guide to using descriptors, rubrics and record sheets when conducting assessments based on the RFCDC

As explained in Chapter 3, a rubric provides a standard set of explicit criteria on which an assessor's judgments about learners' levels of achievement or proficiency in an assessment can be based. Because a rubric makes the assessment criteria explicit, it can help to improve the reliability of the judgments that are made by the assessor about learners' abilities. In addition, if a rubric exists for an assessment, it can be used to communicate the criteria that are going to be used in the assessment to learners in advance, enhancing the transparency of the assessment. A rubric can also be used by learners themselves for self-assessment and for monitoring their own development and progress, empowering them to take control of their own learning. There are therefore multiple benefits to developing and using rubrics. An example of a rudimentary rubric that could be used for an RFCDC assessment was given in Box 3.1 in Chapter 3.

In this Appendix, we provide more detailed guidance on how the competences and the descriptors in the RFCDC can be used to construct rubrics for use in relationship to particular assessments. The process of developing and using a rubric takes place in seven steps.

Developing and using a rubric

Step 1

The first step in constructing a rubric is to identify the situation that is going to be used in the assessment. For example, this situation might consist of an intercultural encounter, a group project on climate change, or a debate on a controversial issue (see Box A.1). The aim of the assessment is to assess the learner's performance in that specific situation.

Box A.1

Illustrations of some specific situations that might be used to assess a learner's democratic and intercultural competences

Situation 1 – Interacting during an intercultural encounter

The learner meets a new classmate who has just joined the school, and they discover that they have different ethnic and religious backgrounds from each other. They start to talk about their respective ethnic and religious practices at home. Their conversation initially requires them to adopt an attitude of *openness* towards each other. As the conversation proceeds, they also need to activate and use their *linguistic and communicative skills* and their *listening skills*. *Empathy* may also be required, along with *analytical thinking skills*, to facilitate comprehension of each other's perspectives about their ethnic and religious practices. It may emerge during the course of the conversation that there are irreconcilable differences in their points of view about the nature of religious practices. If this is the case, then *respect* for difference and *tolerance of ambiguity* need to be deployed.

Situation 2 – Conducting a group project on climate change

Learners may be asked to conduct a project on how activities in their local neighbourhood might be contributing to climate change, and to identify policies and practices that can be used to encourage and foster more environmentally responsible activities. After being placed into small groups, learners are told that they should work with the other members of their group to understand the issues involved, conduct research into possible policies and practices, evaluate those policies and practices, make recommendations about the best policies and practices that might be used, and finally make a presentation to the class about the work that has been conducted by their group. This situation initially requires the learners to use their *co-operation skills*, and possibly their *conflict-resolution skills* if there are disagreements within the group about how to proceed with the project. These skills in turn require them to use their *linguistic and communicative skills* and their *listening skills* in order to discuss and negotiate the issues and decide how to tackle the task. The learners will then need to mobilise their *autonomous learning skills* to conduct research into the issues and the possible policies and practices that may be used, after which they will need to apply their *analytical and critical thinking skills* to understand and evaluate the issues and the policies and practices that have been identified. In conducting the work, and making their recommendations, they will need to draw on their *knowledge and critical understanding of the environment and sustainability*. Finally, to make the presentation to the class, the learners will also have to apply their *linguistic and communicative skills* in order to prepare and deliver the presentation to their class.

Situation 3 – Participating in a discussion about a controversial issue

The teacher may ask two learners who have different perspectives on a controversial issue to discuss that issue, to see if they can understand and appreciate the

perspective of the other. In order to engage effectively in the discussion, the learners need to have some *knowledge and understanding* of the issue. Then, in order to understand the other person's point of view, they need to use their *listening skills*, *analytical and critical thinking skills* and *empathy* to understand the position for which the other learner is arguing. In responding to that position and to advocate their own position, they will need to apply their own *linguistic and communicative skills*. In addition, depending on how the discussion proceeds, they may have to *adapt* and adjust their arguments accordingly. If there are irreconcilable differences in points of view, then *respect* for difference and *tolerance of ambiguity* will need to be deployed at the end of the discussion.

Step 2

The second step requires the assessor (usually the teacher) to identify the particular competences that are most likely to be used by the learner within that situation. Box A.2 lists the particular competences that are most relevant to each of the three situations described in Box A.1. These lists of competences have been derived directly from the descriptions of the situations in Box A.1. However, notice that, in all three cases, "Flexibility and adaptability" is also included. This is because, in all of these cases, in order for the learner to behave appropriately, he or she will need to apply competences in an adaptive and flexible manner in order to meet the shifting needs of the situation as they change. The competence of Flexibility and adaptability therefore needs to be assessed as well.

Box A.2

The clusters of competences that are most likely to be required for appropriate and effective behaviour in the three situations

Situation 1 – Interacting during an intercultural encounter

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

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

Skills of listening and observing

Empathy

Analytical and critical thinking skills

Respect

Tolerance of ambiguity

Flexibility and adaptability

Situation 2 – Conducting a group project on climate change

Co-operation skills

Conflict-resolution skills

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

Skills of listening and observing

Autonomous learning skills

Analytical and critical thinking skills

Knowledge and critical understanding of the environment and sustainability

Flexibility and adaptability

Situation 3 – Participating in a discussion about a controversial issue

Skills of listening and observing

Analytical and critical thinking skills

Empathy

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

Respect

Tolerance of ambiguity

Flexibility and adaptability

Step 3

The third step requires the assessor to construct the rubric itself. This involves reflecting on each of the competences identified in Step 2 and identifying the specific descriptors for that competence which are the most relevant to the particular situation that is being used for the assessment. Because the RFCDC descriptors have been scaled to three levels of proficiency (basic, intermediate and advanced), the rubric would normally contain three columns representing the three proficiency levels (the scaled descriptors can be found in Volume 2 of the RFCDC). However, in the case of younger learners, all three levels might not be relevant to their behaviour – for this reason, rubrics that are developed for use with younger learners may not always contain three columns of descriptors (the descriptors that have been developed specifically for younger learners, which are available on the RFCDC website, may also be used to construct rubrics for learners aged 9 years or younger).

The resulting rubrics might be those shown in Boxes A.3 to A.5. Note that the descriptors included in the rubric will necessarily depend on the particular characteristics of the specific situation that is being used, and therefore should be chosen by the assessor in the light of those characteristics.

Box A.3

A possible rubric for Situation 1 (interacting during an intercultural encounter)

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices	Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and world views.	Expresses curiosity about other beliefs and interpretations and other cultural orientations and affiliations.	Seeks and welcomes opportunities for encountering people with different values, customs and behaviours.
Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills	Asks speakers to repeat what they have said if it wasn't clear to him/her. Can get his/her point across.	Asks questions that show his/her understanding of other people's positions. Can adopt different ways of expressing politeness in another language. When ambiguous communications occur, he/she can clarify or otherwise deal with them satisfactorily.	Can avoid successfully intercultural misunderstandings. Can meet the communicative demands of intercultural situations by using a shared language to understand another language. Can recognise the different communicative conventions that are employed in at least one other social group or culture.
Skills of listening and observing	Listens attentively to other people. Actively listens to others.	Can listen effectively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions. Watches other people's body language to help him/her understand what they are trying to say.	Pays attention to what other people imply but do not say. Observes the behaviour of people who have other cultural affiliations carefully.

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Empathy	Pays attention to what other people are feeling [basic-intermediate].	When talking to someone, tries to understand what they are feeling.	Accurately identifies the feelings of others, even when they do not want to show them. Can describe other people's unique concerns.
Analytical and critical thinking skills	Can identify similarities and differences between new information and what is already known.	Can analyse different points of view, products or practices found in other cultures.	Shows regard for accuracy in analysing and evaluating information [intermediate-advanced].
Respect	Gives space to others to express themselves. Expresses respect for different opinions, world views and ways of life unless they violate human rights.	Treats all people with respect regardless of their cultural background. Expresses respectful attitudes towards other people who differ from himself/herself. Expresses respect for others based on the recognition of the dignity of all persons and of their human rights.	Expresses respect for religious differences.
Tolerance of ambiguity	Shows that he/she can suspend judgments about other people temporarily. Interacts positively without certainty of what the other thinks and feels.	Is comfortable in novel situations. Deals with uncertainty in a positive and constructive manner.	Expresses enjoyment of tackling situations that are complicated. Is comfortable when dealing with ambiguous situations.

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Flexibility and adaptability	Adjusts way of working when this is necessary. Adjusts interaction style to interact more effectively with other people, when this is required.	Shows flexibility when facing obstacles. Adapts effectively to change.	Adapts well to different demands and contexts [intermediate-advanced]. Can adjust his/her habitual way of thinking according to needs and circumstances [intermediate-advanced].

Box A.4

A possible rubric for Situation 2 (conducting a group project on climate change)

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Co-operation skills	Builds positive relationships with other people in a group. When working as a member of a group, does his/her share of the group's work.	Works to build consensus to achieve group goals. When working as a member of a group, keeps others informed about any relevant or useful information.	Generates enthusiasm among group members for accomplishing shared goals. When working with others, supports other people despite differences in points of view.
Conflict-resolution skills	Can communicate with conflicting parties in a respectful manner. Works with others to resolve conflicts.	Can assist others to resolve conflicts by enhancing their understanding of the available options. Can use negotiation skills to resolve conflicts.	Regularly initiates communication to help solve interpersonal conflicts. Can refine possible compromises or solutions to conflicts.
Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills	Can express his/her thoughts on a problem.	Can persuade and negotiate with other people.	Can ensure that he/she understands what another person is saying before responding [intermediate-advanced].

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills	Can get his/her point across.	Makes sure that his/her own messages are understood in the way that they are meant.	Rephrases what another person said, to make sure that he/she has understood them [intermediate-advanced].
Skills of listening and observing	Listens attentively to other people. Actively listens to others.	Can listen effectively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions. Watches other people's body language to help him/her understand what they are trying to say.	Pays attention to what other people imply but do not say.
Autonomous learning skills	Shows ability to identify resources for learning (e.g. people, books, internet). Seeks clarification of new information from other people when needed.	Can learn about new topics with minimal supervision. Can use information technology effectively to access, research, organise and integrate information.	Can select the most reliable sources of information or advice from the range available. Shows ability to monitor, define, prioritise and complete tasks without direct oversight.
Analytical and critical thinking skills	Can draw conclusions from an analysis of information. Can compare different ideas when thinking about a topic.	Shows that he/she thinks about whether the information he/she uses is correct. Can assess the risks associated with different options.	Can use explicit and specifiable criteria, principles or values to make judgments. Can draw the results of an analysis together in an organised and coherent manner to construct logical and defensible conclusions.

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Knowledge and critical understanding of the environment and sustainability	Can reflect critically on the risks associated with environmental damage. Can reflect critically on the values, behaviour and lifestyles that are required for a sustainable future. Can reflect critically on the need for responsible consumption.		Can reflect critically on the connections between economic, social, political and environmental processes. Can explain the impact that personal choices, political actions and patterns of consumption may have in other parts of the world.
Flexibility and adaptability	Adjusts way of working when this is necessary. Adjusts interaction style to interact more effectively with other people, when this is required.	Shows flexibility when facing obstacles. Can modify his/her own learning strategies when necessary.	Adapts well to different demands and contexts [intermediate-advanced]. Can adjust his/her habitual way of thinking according to needs and circumstances [intermediate-advanced].

Box A.5

A possible rubric for Situation 3 (discussing a controversial issue)

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Skills of listening and observing	Listens carefully to differing opinions. Listens attentively to other people. Actively listens to others.	Can listen effectively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions.	Pays attention to what other people imply but do not say.

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Analytical and critical thinking skills	Uses evidence to support his/her opinions. Can draw conclusions from the analysis of an argument. Can draw conclusions from an analysis of information. Can compare different ideas when thinking about a topic.	Shows that he/she thinks about whether the information he/she uses is correct. Can analyse evidence when evaluating an argument. Can evaluate information critically. Can distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and evidence.	Can identify any discrepancies or inconsistencies or divergences in materials being analysed. Can draw the results of an analysis together in an organised and coherent manner to construct logical and defensible conclusions.
Empathy	Pays attention to what other people are feeling [basic-intermediate].	When talking to someone, tries to understand what they are feeling. Shows ability to describe what other people are feeling.	Accurately identifies the feelings of others, even when they do not want to show them. Can describe other people's unique concerns.
Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills	Can express his/her thoughts on a problem. Can get his/her point across.	Achieves good interactions with others by making his/her own communications clear [basic-intermediate]. Makes sure that his/her own messages are understood in the way that they are meant.	Can ensure that he/she understands what another person is saying before responding [intermediate-advanced]. Rephrases what another person said, to make sure that he/she has understood them [intermediate-advanced]. Can manage breakdowns in communication by providing restatements,

	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
			revisions or simplifications of his/ her own misunderstood communications [intermediate-advanced].
Respect	Gives space to others to express themselves. Expresses respect for other people as equal human beings.	Treats all people with respect regardless of their cultural background. Expresses respect for different opinions or ideas unless they violate human rights.	Expresses respect for people who hold different political opinions from himself/herself.
Tolerance of ambiguity	Engages well with other people who have a variety of different points of view.	Expresses a willingness to consider contradictory or incomplete information without automatically rejecting it or jumping to a premature conclusion [basic-intermediate]. Deals with uncertainty in a positive and constructive manner.	Expresses a desire to have his/her own ideas and values challenged. Expresses enjoyment of tackling situations that are complicated.
Flexibility and adaptability	Adjusts way of working when this is necessary. Adjusts interaction style to interact more effectively with other people, when this is required.	Shows flexibility when facing obstacles. Adapts effectively to change.	Adapts well to different demands and contexts [intermediate-advanced]. Can adjust his/her habitual way of thinking according to needs and circumstances [intermediate-advanced].

It is clear from these three examples that, in practice, it may not always be possible to assess the learner's proficiency in all of the competences that are relevant to the particular assessment situation that is being used, because this could potentially overload the assessor. For example, the learner's behaviour in Situation 2 (conducting a group project on climate change), as it is described above, would require making judgments about the learner's proficiency in the use of eight different competences involving 46 descriptors. The overloading of the assessor created by this number of competences and descriptors could make the assessment task too demanding and impractical for the assessor. Instead, it may be preferable to identify perhaps three to six key competences to assess, and to focus attention on making judgments about the learner's proficiency on only those key competences.

Three further features of the rubrics shown in Boxes A.3 to A.5 should also be noted. First, there does not need to be the same number of descriptors in each cell in a rubric. Second, there may be some empty cells in the rubric because it is not always possible to identify suitable validated and scaled descriptors for the situation that has been used for the assessment at all three levels of proficiency. Third, some of the descriptors in the rubrics may be drawn from the transitional basic-intermediate level or the transitional intermediate-advanced level (see the full bank of validated descriptors in Volume 2 of the RFCDC for the descriptors that fall into these transitional levels).

Step 4

The fourth step requires the assessor to choose a suitable assessment method to gather evidence about the learner's performance within the situation. For example, the learner could be asked to produce a written description and critical reflection on his or her behaviour within the situation (either an essay or a reflective journal entry), or to give a presentation to the class about his or her performance (assessment through oral presentation). Another possibility is for the assessor to observe the learner within the situation and make notes about their behaviour (observational assessment). Alternatively, the assessor could talk to the learner and enquire about his or her behaviour and then make notes about what the learner has said (dialogue-based assessment).

The choice of assessment method needs to be based on judgments about: (i) the suitability of the method for use within the particular cultural and educational context in which the assessment is being made; (ii) the suitability of the method for collecting evidence about the particular competences that are being assessed and the descriptors that appear in the rubric (the method has to be able to provide evidence about the behaviours that are specified in the rubric); and (iii) the expected validity, reliability, equity, respectfulness, transparency and practicality of the assessment method when used to assess these particular competences in that particular cultural and educational context.

Step 5

Having chosen a suitable assessment method, and having used it to collect evidence about the learner's behaviour within the assessment situation, the fifth step requires

the assessor to make a judgment about the highest level of proficiency that has been displayed by the learner on each individual competence that is being assessed. This judgment may not always be easy to make, but attending closely to the explicit criteria contained in the rubric can help. In addition, it is possible to involve the learner in the process of making the judgment, or to involve a colleague (or in some cases, one of the learner's peers). However, it may be the case that insufficient evidence was collected to enable a judgment to be made about one or more of the competences. If this is the case, that fact should simply be noted.

In making these judgments, it is important to be aware that a learner's levels of proficiency on different competences are unlikely to correspond to one another. For example, a learner could be at an advanced level on one competence, at an intermediate level on another competence, and at a basic level on another. The RFCDC does not make any assumption that an individual learner's levels of proficiency will be the same on all of the competences – some competences may well develop at earlier ages and more rapidly than others.

Step 6

The sixth step requires the assessor to record the outcome of the assessment. This can be done in a variety of ways. For example, a record sheet could be drawn up, with all 20 competences included in it (so that the same sheet can be used for all assessments irrespective of the specific situation that is being used). An example of such a sheet is presented in Box A.6 ("not applicable" may be marked against those competences that are not involved in the assessment). Alternatively, a much shorter record sheet, which only contains those particular competences that are included in the assessment, could be used (but such a sheet will then need to be tailored specifically for each individual assessment situation that is used).

A blank row may be used to indicate that the competence was not used even at a basic level of proficiency. Furthermore, only the highest level of proficiency that has been displayed by the learner on each individual competence that has been assessed needs to be marked on the record sheet. This is because if a learner displays the behaviour described by a descriptor at a particular level, we know from the statistical procedure that was originally used to scale the descriptors that the learner is also highly likely to be able to display the behaviours that are described by the descriptors for that competence at the lower levels (e.g. if a learner displays a behaviour at an advanced level for a particular competence, then it is highly likely that he or she will also be able to display the behaviours at both the intermediate and basic levels for that same competence).

Another more graphic way in which the results of the assessment could be recorded and displayed is through the use of a radar chart, which can be constructed easily using Excel. A blank radar chart representing the 20 competences is shown in Figure A.1 (in which the inner circle represents the basic level, the middle circle represents the intermediate level, and the outer circle represents the advanced level). Figure A.2 shows a hypothetical radar chart representing the levels of proficiency that might be displayed by a learner in an assessment task in which six competences have been assessed.

Box A.6

An example record sheet for recording learners' proficiency, which includes all 20 competences

	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Values			
Valuing human dignity and human rights			
Valuing cultural diversity			
Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law			
Attitudes			
Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices			
Respect			
Civic-mindedness			
Moral responsibility			
Self-efficacy			
Tolerance of ambiguity			
Skills			
Autonomous learning skills			
Analytical and critical thinking skills			
Skills of listening and observing			
Empathy			
Flexibility and adaptability			
Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills			
Co-operation skills			
Conflict-resolution skills			
Knowledge and critical understanding			
Knowledge and critical understanding of the self			
Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication			
Knowledge and critical understanding of the world			

Figure A.1: A blank radar chart that can be used to record a learner's proficiency

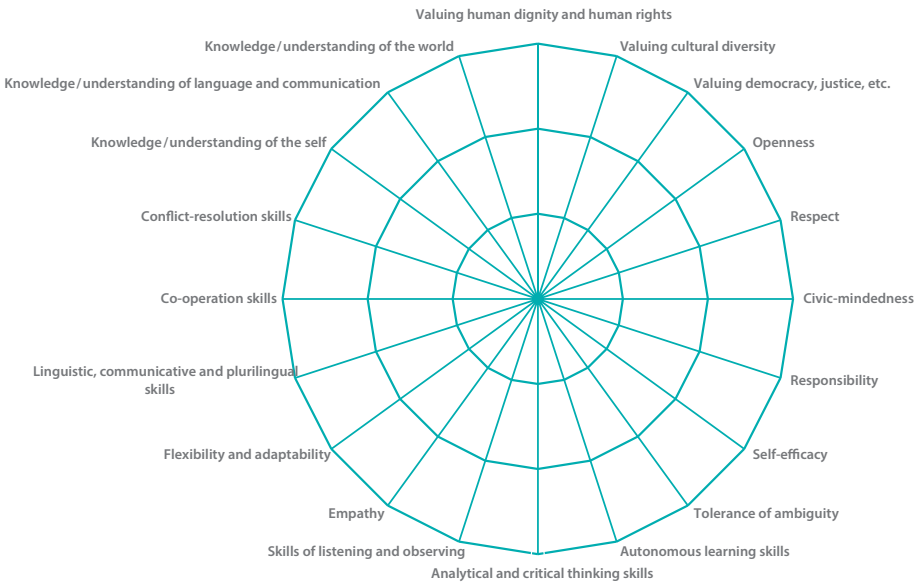
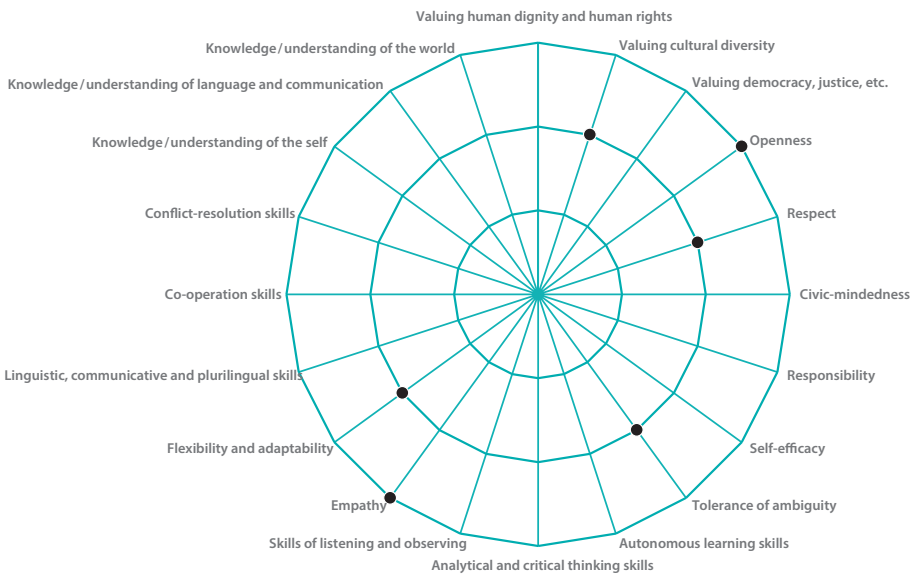


Figure A. 2: A hypothetical radar chart representing the levels of proficiency displayed in an assessment task where only six competences have been assessed



The end result of these steps in the assessment process is therefore a record sheet or radar chart that summarises the proficiency with which the learner used and applied each of the assessed competences within the assessment situation.

In other words, the sheet contains a descriptive profile of the learner's performance on the assessment task.

Step 7

While the above procedure can be used to record conclusions about how the learner used his or her competences within a single situation, the RFCDC recommends that assessments of proficiency in the use of competences should be made in multiple rather than single situations. One of the reasons for this is because a learner's proficiency in the use of a competence can vary from one situation to another – for example, he or she may fail to recognise the need to use a relevant competence in a particular situation, may not always be motivated to use that competence, or may be distracted from using a competence in a relevant situation due to the presence of other competing demands or because of the characteristics of the other people who are present in that situation. For this reason, conducting an assessment of a competence only in a single situation might result in an underestimation of a learner's actual proficiency.

Furthermore, the range of situations that should be used for assessing proficiency (as opposed to achievement) should include situations not only within but also beyond the school. This is because the overall aim of the RFCDC is to educate learners to function as effective democratic citizens in the wider societies in which they are living. The assessment of proficiency should therefore involve not only situations that occur within the school but also situations that take place outside the school, in the local community or, in the case of older learners, in the world beyond. Evidence about the learner's performance in these situations could be collected through any one of a variety of means (e.g. dialogue with the teacher, an oral presentation, an essay, or an entry in a reflective journal or portfolio).

If this recommendation of the RFCDC is followed, and a learner's proficiency in using competences is assessed using a range of different situations both within and beyond the school, then the assessment process described in steps 1-6 above will need to be repeated for each individual situation that is used. The end result will be a set of record sheets, each one of which records the learner's performance in a single specific situation.

This set of record sheets may be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learner, and to set new learning goals for them to pursue in the future (i.e. for formative purposes). The record sheets can also be used to diagnose areas in which the learner is experiencing particular difficulties (i.e. for diagnostic purposes) or to monitor the progress that the learner is making (i.e. for monitoring purposes). If the assessments have taken place over a significant period of time (e.g. over the course of a school year or even longer), the record sheets may be organised chronologically to illustrate the developing competences of the learner and to monitor and display the progress that she or he has been making over that period of time; the most recent record sheets can be used to provide a summary overview of the learner's proficiency at the end of the period of time, on the basis of which an overall summative descriptive profile for the learner may be written (i.e. for summative purposes).

Less structured approaches to conducting assessments based on the RFCDC

The assessment procedure that has been described above represents a highly structured approach. The merits of a structured approach are that it is an open and transparent process, and it uses a clear and explicit sequence of steps that a teacher or other assessor may follow in making assessments based on the RFCDC.

However, this is not the only approach that can be taken. Less structured assessments can also be made. For example, assessments may be made through the teacher engaging in dialogue with the learner, where the teacher probes the learner about his or her competences and the learning outcomes that have or have not been achieved or displayed across a range of situations. Such dialogue may focus on why the learner chose to behave in the way that they did within each situation, whether there are other ways in which they could have behaved, whether the learner achieved their intended goals within the situations, whether there might have been better ways to achieve those goals, and how they could improve their performance in such situations on future similar occasions. Indeed, a dialogical approach such as this is very simple and straightforward to administer, is highly practical to administer within the classroom, and can be extremely useful for both formative and diagnostic purposes. This approach has the additional advantage that it is likely to enhance the learner's ability to reflect critically on their own performance.

That said, despite the informal manner in which this kind of assessment is carried out, several steps of the more structured approach should still be implicit within this less formal approach. For example, the teacher should be able to identify the competences that are relevant to the situations discussed with the learner. The teacher should also have at least an outline rubric implicitly in mind, that is, an understanding of the kinds of behaviours that would index different levels of proficiency for those competences. Obviously, the learner needs to have participated in one or more situations to generate the behaviour that forms the basis of the dialogue. In discussing the learner's behaviour within those situations with the learner, the teacher is likely to draw on the implicit rubric to help identify the levels of proficiency that the learner has displayed in those situations, and to encourage them to think about more advanced levels of proficiency. Indeed, it is only the final step of formally recording the results of the assessment on a record sheet that may be completely omitted when conducting an informal dialogue-based assessment such as this.

This informal approach to assessment and the highly structured approach represent two ends of a continuum that runs from informal to formal assessment. Midway along the continuum would be an approach where, for example, an explicit rubric containing specific competences that are relevant to a given situation is given to learners, and they then make an assessment of their own performance within that situation by referring to the rubric. Alternatively, a peer could conduct the assessment using the rubric, perhaps in conversation with the learner. Record sheets or radar charts documenting the final outcomes of the assessment may or may not be used. If they are used, they could be shared with the teacher. Alternatively, they could be confidential to the learner and stored in the learner's own private portfolio that contains their work.

Conclusion

Teachers should use their professional judgment to decide which type of assessment approach to adopt, bearing in mind the purposes for which the outcomes of the assessment are to be used, the constraints on their time, the material resources that are available to them, and the specific practices that are the most appropriate to use within their own educational and cultural settings.

It will be helpful if teachers are trained (or train themselves in groups) in the development of rubrics and how to use the descriptors as criteria for making judgments about learners' proficiency. Such training will improve the reliability and the validity of the judgments that they make.

The Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture offers a systematic approach to designing the teaching, learning and assessment of competences for democratic culture. It specifies a set of 20 competences which learners need to acquire in order to function effectively as democratic citizens in culturally diverse societies, and provides descriptors that can be used to determine the level of proficiency that a learner has acquired in each of the 20 competences.

This book offers detailed guidance for educators on how these materials may be applied in the classroom in order to assess learners' proficiency in competences for democratic culture. The book begins with an overview of the Reference Framework and then explains the principles that need to be followed when selecting assessment methods. It continues by describing 12 methods that may be used, all of which have been judged to be consistent with the principles of the Reference Framework. All 12 methods are currently being used in one or more of the Council of Europe's member states, and they are therefore tried and tested assessment methods that are known to be practicable for classroom use. Concrete examples of how each method may be used in practice are also provided.

PREMS 005521

ENG

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

http://book.coe.int
ISBN 978-92-871-8839-7 (pdf only)
€18/US$36

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE