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Report on the Present Trainer Training Course of the Pestalozzi Programme (Council of Europe) “Evaluation of Transversal Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge” (Module A)

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1 Introduction

In July 2015 the Pestalozzi Programme of the Council of Europe launched a 15-month trainer training course on the “Evaluation of transversal attitudes, skills and knowledge”. The tradition of offering trainer training courses that relate to the Council of Europe’s core values of human rights, democracy and rule of law has been well established since 2007, including topics such as Education for Democratic Citizenship, Intercultural Education, Image of the Other in History Teaching or Collaborative Learning. Nonetheless, this course is special. Special in the sense, that the new focus was to move away from a *vertical*, issue-related approach to a *horizontal* approach: “What do teachers need to know in order to develop a form of education that supports peace and democracy? What do they need to be able to do? And how do they need to be able to be?” (Mompoin-Gaillard, 2011, p. 41)

Consequently, this in-service trainer training synthesizes the many years of experiences of the Pestalozzi Programme’s activities in preparing teachers and teacher education in how to teach and learn for a sustainable democratic society. It does so by systematically carving out those *transversal attitudes, skills and knowledge* (TASKs) that have proven to be needed in educational settings to help establish and preserve sustainable democracies. Thus, an innovative set of learnable, developable democratic competences is offered to be tested and tried out in educational practice, also with regard to the difficult question of their possible assessment or evaluation (compare Mompoin-Gaillard, 2015a, p. 18).

Key to this course is the question of how democratic values, democratic attitudes and democratic beliefs interact and what that means for the planning and implementation of educational activities: “If values affect our attitudes and behaviour, we will need to dwell on the question of “how the educator can move from values to developing attitudes and behaviours that these values sustain”. What are the observable attitudes and behaviours that translate values and principles into better communication and understanding between individuals and into active citizenship to organise a better, more just world?” (Mompoin-Gaillard, 2011a, p. 40)

The timing of this trainer training course – not to forget

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the corresponding publication “TASKs for democracy. 60 activities to learn and assess transversal attitudes, skills and knowledge”, to be found on the CoE-website - seems to be more than timely with regard to “the fragility of democracy and participation in democratic processes and institutions in many European countries.” (Mompoin-Gaillard, 2015, p. 17)

2 The TASKs in detail

The democratic competences are divided into five dimensions:

- diversity and empathy: refers to intercultural competences and mutual understanding,
- co-operation and participation: refers to the individual and group efforts necessary for working together,
- human rights and equity: refers to aspects of social justice, anti-discrimination and equal rights,
- knowledge construction and epistemology: refers to the way we think about knowledge,
- self and interaction: refers to awareness of self in relation to the other (individual or group). (Mompoin-Gaillard 2015b, p. 33)

The 60 activities included in the handbook are systematically combined with the TASKs – which under-lines the very special quality of this project – and can thus be used in class or elsewhere to

- challenge attitudes and behaviour [...] that are contrary to human rights,
- intervene and express opposition when there is an expression of prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups,
- challenge stereotypes and prejudice,
- encourage positive attitudes towards contributions to society made by individuals who wish to participate in democratic endeavours, and
- mediate in conflict situations. (see Mompoin-Gaillard 2015a, p. 17-18)

3 About the trainer training course

The following TASKs (components of democratic competences) have been chosen from the handbook by the author to plan, implement and evaluate a new Training Unit on “The refugee crisis in Europe – putting solidarity to the test”:

Attitudes: *Readiness to adopt the values of human rights and democratic citizenship as the foundation of living and acting* (A_HR_2; see handbook p. 34, and p. 327)

Skills: *Ability to draw on other's diverse expertise and experience for the benefit of the group's work* (S_COOP_2; p. 36, p. 327)

Knowledge: *Understanding of the way in which meanings of concepts are influenced by contexts and power relations.* (K_EPIST_2; p. 39; p. 328)

This planning process is completed in teams and thus in itself reflects the philosophy of the trainer training course, which "includes two face-to-face meetings (module A and module B) and online collaboration before, between and after the meetings, making this a blended learning approach." (Lazar/Mompoin-Gaillard, 2015, p. 11) A well-organised co-operation between course members and facilitators lies at the heart of the entire course for several reasons:

Firstly: The training activities help to create networks of educational professionals (Community of Practice) across the continent, stimulate interaction and create new knowledge. This work is supported by a virtual platform. (see Huber, 2011)

Secondly: „Co-operative learning is one such specific approach to learning and teaching that has demonstrated an ability to promote the development of democratic and intercultural competences regardless of the subject matter.“ (Lazar, 2015, p. 16)

Thirdly: „Educators adopting [a co-operative learning] approach claim that it not only helps students to better master the academic content of the class but also attenuates hostile and intolerant attitudes in the classroom. Because each student is dependent on the others to complete an activity, the method encourages a re-assessment of classmates, boosting unpopular students' ability to improve their reputation and helping popular students to become more accepting of others.“ (Mompoin-Gaillard, 2015, p. 21)

These insights shape the philosophy of the Pestalozzi Programme's Community of Practice that "views the prevention of discrimination and violence not as a thematic issue but as a process, as a series of concrete actions that supports better organisation of teaching and learning, and which helps teachers to reflect on and prevent violent, discriminatory and anti-democratic structure.“ (Arato, 2015, p. 22)

Josef Huber, Head of the Pestalozzi Programme, sums up this approach as follows:

Methodology is not neutral. The way we train and teach needs to reflect and model the principles we train and teach for. In other words: the medium is (also) the message. Participative, democratic skills and behaviour cannot be taught in the same way that mere knowledge can be transmitted. [The training process] aims to mobilise the trainees' knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to further develop them through a collaborative process of challenge, experience and reflection. [...] Such a process needs time. The learning outcome of a training process that covers a certain period of time, with phases of face-to-face meetings

and phases of individual work coupled with mentoring and peer support largely exceeds one-off training activities that do not build on organised and structured follow-up. (Huber, 2011, p. 141; for a deeper understanding of this approach see Wahl, 2013, p. 291)

4 Selected observations from the perspective of social science education

Experiencing this trainer training course as a politics teacher, teacher trainer and lecturer, who has been educated and trained mainly in German contexts, three inter-related aspects seem to be particularly worth looking at (a-c).

a) The *60 activities* have the potential to show the way to truly learn about democracy

Pascale Mompoin-Gaillard using the example of a well-documented activity called "the neighbourhood yard" (see handbook, p. 44-46) points to the potentially powerful learning effects of combining action-orientation with professional de-briefing: "The aim of the activity is to raise learners' awareness of the psychosocial dynamics of inclusion/exclusion, co-operation/ competition and discrimination/prejudice. It may be exploited to develop learners' reflection on their own attitudes, beliefs and values, and to help them gain new skills and develop their knowledge of important concepts related to intercultural competence such as identity, discrimination, otherness, empathy, diversity, co-operation and interdependence." (Mompoin-Gaillard, 2015c, p. 44)

For Mompoin-Gaillard, the "gold" lies in the debriefing as it helps learners to raise awareness of their personal feelings about and attitudes towards specific issues as well as observe and infer the impact their actions can have on the group (see Mompoin-Gaillard, 2015c, p. 43-44). Besides these personal insights, social and political implications in the real world can also be included when reflecting on the experienced course of the activities, as will be shown in the following.

b) The TASKs and truly *political* learning can complement each other in a coherent Training Unit

Josef Huber stresses the integrative function of the TASKs:

The importance of these so-called soft skills has long been underestimated [...]. Today we start to realise that only through the convergence of competences, specialist and subject-specific competences on the one hand and transversal, "soft" knowledge, skills and attitudes on the other, will it be possible to reach the nature and level of learning outcomes which are essential to make our societies politically, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and democratic in the Europe of today, and above all, tomorrow. (Huber 2011b, p. 146)

Accordingly, seen from the point of view of Social Science Education, the TASKs can possibly fulfill an important function by integrating several layers of democracy. If you define democracy as a complex interaction on different levels (Himmelmann, 2002, p. 33), democracy can be seen as a way of life and/or a form of society and/or a form of government. Thus, if you want to become more competent as a democratic citizen, this has consequences on three interrelated levels: On an individual level this means developing with regard to yourself and interaction, diversity and empathy; on a social level one might improve in cooperation and participation as well as solidarity; on a political level one mainly learns about human rights and equity, about political conflicts and power structures or real decision-making processes.

These levels can then be deliberately integrated in Trainings Units that consider respective TASKs as mentioned above. With its focus on concepts (e.g. solidarity or power), K_EPIST_ 2 seems particularly helpful to include a political dimension in the Training Unit. In this context, the CLEAR approach (Concept Learning for Empowerment through Analysis and Reflection) could support this multi-dimensional approach to democratic and political learning: "CLEAR provides a concept-learning methodology that fosters learning processes of (self)-reflexivity, multi-perspectivity and information literacy for concepts central for political debate and societal change. Key concepts such as democracy and human rights are always contested. They are, in other words, sites of social, political and cultural disagreement and even conflict." (www.clear-project.net)

This approach does not contradict the fundamental belief of the Pestalozzi Programme, "that all traditional school and college subjects can incorporate cross-curricular [democratic] approaches, be it language/literature, mathematics, science, history, geography, art, drama, modern languages, physical education, music, or information and communication technology [...]" (Mompoin-Gaillard, 2015, p. 18), it rather complements these fields.

Sybille Reinhardt, a renowned German academic, however observes: "The frequent demands for civic education as a teaching principle are motivated by a variety of interests (including hidden ones). Calling for the inclusion of civic education in all, or at least many, subjects can stem from a negative attitude toward the subject itself: if civic education is part of every subject, then this makes civics class as such superfluous. In my experience, such an attitude indicates scepticism toward the political sphere and a reluctance toward learning conflict competency, as well as, more generally, a lack of familiarity with the logic of political, economic, and legal behaviour. While those exhibiting this stance recognize social behaviour (such as in a family context), they are not able to abstract from or politicize it." (Reinhardt, 2015, p. 61)

This said, the relation between democracy and politics seems to be worth looking at in international / comparative education. It seems as if *democracy* is associated

positively whereas *politics* has a negative connotation. This raises the question of how to think and arrange content between TASKs and subjects like politics, government or social sciences in an international educational setting.

c) The evaluation and assessment of soft skills and/or attitudes is central to the success of TASKs in formal educational practice, but is difficult to implement.ⁱ

Two aspects need to be considered when, for example, dealing with TASK A_HR_2 (Readiness to adopt the values of human rights and democratic citizenship as the foundation of living and acting).

Firstly, "if learning is not subjected to testing, then it will not be recognised. In this way, as a tacit principle, what is assessed not only limits the scope of what teachers teach, but also limits how much effort students will put in their learning and work [...]. (Mompoin-Gaillard 2015: 21)

Secondly, "[the] assessment of results pertaining to values and attitudes [...] poses many ethical and procedural difficulties." (Mompoin-Gaillard, 2015a, p. 21)

It will be interesting and necessary for practitioners and researchers to find out more about practical ways to keep the open, playful character of activities like "the neighbourhood yard" while avoiding lip services or encroaching educational settings.

5 Attitudes and values count

As mentioned above, the way the trainer training course is realized methodologically, it recognizes the fundamental importance of making values and attitudes with regard to democracy accessible and workable in educational settings: "To raise awareness of and sensitivity to the issues of human rights, democracy and rule of law, one must call on citizens' [and students'/ trainees'/ teachers'] frames of values to tap into their affective register. This is why, when attempting at determining "what?", "why?" and "how?" we should design teacher education to support sustainable democratic societies – the question of values can not be circumvented." (Mompoin-Gaillard, 2011, p. 40) The values, the Council of Europe has taken up the cause of, are actively embraced by the Pestalozzi Programme, using the European Youth Centre in Strassburg as a pan-European teacher training centre: "Lecturing about democracy and the importance of intercultural competence will not be credible and is not likely to have an impact if trainers or teachers are not democratic and interculturally competent in their communication and their approach to the teaching and learning process." (Lazar, 2015, p. 16)

The truly international course - as well as the handbook - has been and still is consistent between concepts and values that are taught and the concepts and values that are used in the daily trainer training practice. The team of facilitators, for instance, comes from Hungary, Portugal, Croatia and France. The two official languages (English; French) are used alternately, plenary sessions are translated simultaneously. With educational



professionals from all over Europe and not more than two people coming from the same country, the course is in itself an inter-cultural encounter.

The action-oriented, reflexive and very well thought-through concept of *TASKs for democracy* should be widely used, tested, tried out and discussed in all kinds of formal and non-formal educational settings. In my view, especially student teachers at universities all over Europe should be confronted with this holistic approach in an early, but hopefully influential stage of their professional careers. The area of conflict between democratic/educational mission and academic content needs to be permanently balanced or negotiated, of course. Perhaps the *TASKs for democracy*-project likewise provides an appropriate concept also for precisely this ends.

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Endnote

ⁱ "By "evaluation" we mean activities that focus on learning and teaching outcomes, providing information for improvement and further planning. [...] By "assessment" we mean activities that measure and reflect the level of understanding and mastery of competences regarding the content of the session." (Lazar/Mompoin-Gaillard 2015: 42)