

PROMOTING STUDENTS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: THE PROJECT SPACE



 **Gina Chianese**¹

¹University of Bolzano, Bolzano, Italy

Email: ginachianese@yahoo.it



ABSTRACT

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The project SPACE, described following, aims to support empowerment, participation and active citizenship of young people across Europe through active involvement in the school and local community. In order to support this process, SPACE offers innovative methods and tools to encourage students' participation and to develop their competences and skill, such as collaboration, participation, negotiation, and emotional intelligence. In this way, they can learn democratic ideas, and practice competencies for active citizenship through participation at working groups or involvement in student council, developing as future active citizens.

1. INTRODUCTION

European citizenship represents a permanent priority in the European Agenda and many documents recognize the importance of promoting active citizenship across education systems throughout Europe (European Council, 2001; European Commission, 2009).

Furthermore, the European framework on key competences for lifelong learning (2006) suggested that young people should develop social and civic skills during their school education in order to become active citizens.

This underline that schools play a key role in fostering citizenship skills and competencies, and in supporting the new generation to realize an inclusive societies and put democratic and civic education in practiceⁱ (Englund, 2000; Amnå *et al.*, 2009; Sherrod *et al.*, 2010).

This competences/skills-based approach demands to understand democratic value and to experience active political participation and civic engagement at school through new teaching methodologies allowing intentional discussion, active cooperation in decision-making processes in schools (such as student radio or newspapers, elections of student representatives, volunteering for campaign work, ...) and promoting students' council or students group.

In this way, young people could become able to know deeper the principles, value and attitudes of democracy and to apply them in a real context.

2. CIVIC AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

In order to explore how different countries prepare young people to act as citizens, we assume as starting point the results from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), an on-going, comparative research program of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

ICCS aim to measure contexts and outcomes of civic and citizenship education and is linked to the IEA Civic Education Study (CIVED), (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001; Schulz and Sibberns, 2004).

ICCS use the term civic and citizenship education «to emphasize a broadening of the concept, processes, and practices that have occurred in this area [since 1999]. *Civic education* focuses on knowledge and understanding of formal institutions and processes of civic life. *Citizenship education* focuses on knowledge and understanding and on opportunities for participation and engagement in both civic and civil society» (Schulz *et al.*, 2010).

The ICCS assessment framework is organized around 4 content domains (each domain is made-up a set of sub-domains): Civic society and system, civic principles, civic participation, civic identities and include cognitive and affective-behavioral components (Table 1).

Table-1. ICCS assessment framework

	Content Domain				Total
	Civic society & sustems	Civic principles	Civic partecipation	Civic identities	
Cognitive domains					
Knowing	15	3	1	0	19
Analysing and reasoning	17	22	17	5	61
Total	32	25	18	5	80
Affective-behavioral domains					
Value beliefs	12	12	0	0	24
Attitudes	12	18	18	14	62
Behavioral intentions			21		21
Behaviours			14		14
Total	24	30	53	14	

Source: Schulz *et al.* (2010)

ICCS results underline that preparing students to be active citizen involves helping them to develop appropriate knowledge and understanding, and participating in activities in and outside the school through democratic idea and procedures.

Educating to a democratic value at school means to “flip” traditional views of the teaching and learning processⁱⁱ and school making process.

Dewey argued «we need not only education in democracy, but also democracy in education [...] for the welfare of the young thoughtful citizens must participate in the politics of public schooling» (cited in Tyack (1997)). Democratic schools commonly show the following aspects: (a) shared decision-making among the students and staff; (b) a learner-centered approach in which students choose their daily activities; (c) equality among staff and students; and (d) the community as an extension of the classroom (Loflin, 2008).

These aspects underline a *whole-school approach*, involving everyone (students, teachers, parents,...) to the wider community (Eurydice, 2012).

3. SPACE PROJECT: STUDENTS PROMOTING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN EUROPE

The Erasmus + Project SPACE - Promoting Active Citizenship in Europeⁱⁱⁱ- encourages active learning and participation at school endorsing students to “learn democracy practicing democracy” and promotes the UNCRC, in details the Article 12 and Article 13.

In a wide sense, SPACE ambition is to realize an innovative *whole-school approach* that involves all the participants (students, teachers, principals, and community) offering a set of tools and methodology to develop citizenship education.

The main aim is to prepare young people to become active citizens empowering them to play a more active, engaged role in school community and in the wider society, developing attitude, skills and key competences (2006/962/EC).

In order to summarize this vision, SPACE realized a tree (figure 1) as an evocative mind map, to visualize the main components for an active citizenship education.

The Competences (Skills/Attitudes) are the roots, the Knowledge are the leaves, the (Working) Methods are the flowers, in order to reach the Outcomes/Results (fruits).

Among them, there is a relationship of interdependence: to flourish the tree requires active methods represented by flowers. The flowers developing produce the Fruits / the results.

It's a metaphor of a growing and cyclic process of development that move from the competences and developing through managing activities in school councils/ groups and in many participation opportunities (eg. debates, forum, assembly, ...).

The term competence is crucial and it is relate to a «combination, recognized and proved, of representations, knowledge, capability and behavior fixed and matched in a given context» (Le Boterf, 1990). Competence consists in the individual's ability to combine different resources (knowledge, abilities and behavior) and to manage them in a different context.

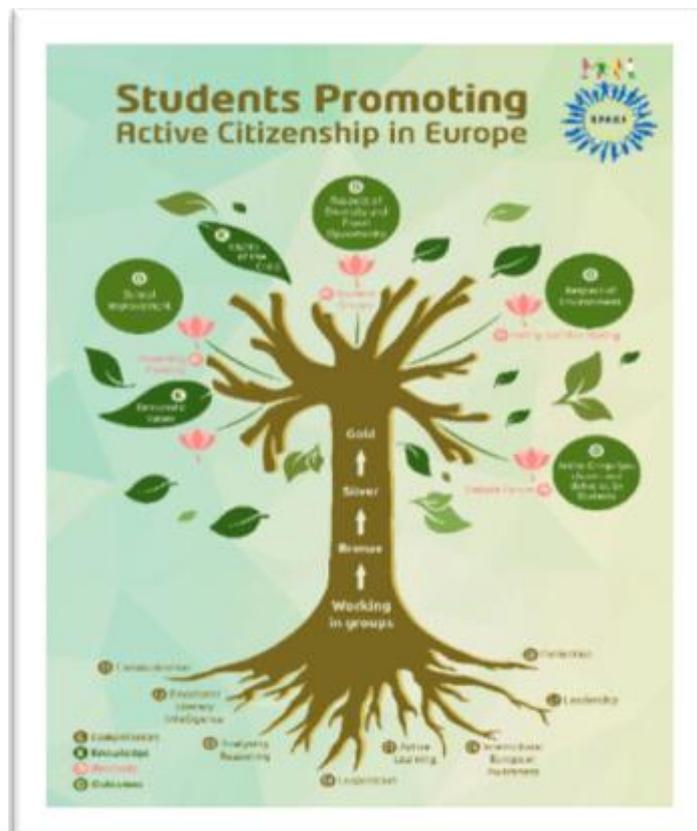


Figure-1. SPACE Tree

Source: original intellectual output of the Erasmus+ project SPACE. Final scientific report

In order to support schools, teacher and students to adopt democratic rules, develop competences and skills, to learn how to participate and cooperate, SPACE realized different working tools consistent and complementary to each other: the Matrix of Competences (MoC), the Kite Marks and the Toolkit.

The MoC (figure 2) includes the core competences to support and improve the participation of the students in the school governance and in the community, and/or working in school councils/ groups. Each area of competence specifies the significant competence components.

The MoC is a guideline suggesting the key area of competence and the components to develop to promote an effective active citizenship.

The Matrix of Competences (MoC)	
Competences	Competence components
C.1. Communication	Effective use of verbal/ non verbal, oral/ written, communication
	Listening and contextualizing information
	Asserting own positions and listen to the opinion of others
	Use consistent and documented argumentation, in presentations and reporting
C.2. Emotional literacy /intelligence	Awareness of their emotions/ feelings and those of the others – empathy
	Understanding the importance of self esteem
	Sense of belonging and commitment
	Self esteem/ self confidence /identity
C.3. Active learning	Learning to learn and regulation
	Use of appropriate tools
	Planning, organising and managing working time and resources
	Work towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance, prioritising actions
	Autonomy and responsibility
C.4. Knowledge and reasoning	Peer tutoring
	Information management , Collection and use information, related to social/civic competences, for understanding the society
	Knowledge of values, rights and duties /responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society; the concept of democracy; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), art. 12 and 13.
	Complex and critical thinking
	Development of judgement
C. 5. Cooperation / collaboration cooperative learning in groups / school councils	Decision making
	Understanding the role of the Council/ group and its members keeping autonomy in learning and behaving
	Expressing ideas, and views, performing cooperative actions
	Social skills, understand and respect others, deal with conflict
C.6. Intercultural awareness and European dimension	Solidarity with the disadvantaged and the marginalised
	Awareness of prejudices and stereotypes, overcoming them working with a range of partners /groups from different backgrounds
	Respect of social, cultural, religious, age, gender diversities, rejecting discrimination
	Awareness of their national, and European citizenship
C.7. Leadership	Breaking down barriers and misconceptions of the partner countries and foster positive attitudes towards all countries in Europe
	Besides cooperation skills (C.c.)
	Initiative and entrepreneurship, creativity
	Organisation skills
C.8. Assessment/ Evaluation for mentoring	Democratic decision making and negotiation
	Awareness of the aims of their assessment work
	Use of appropriate tools (list of items) for observation in not mechanic way
	Attention to the context
	Metacognitive skills for self assessment

Fig-2. MoC

Source: original intellectual output of the Erasmus+ project SPACE. Final scientific report

The *Kite Mark* is closely linked to the MoC and it's made-up of set of criteria at the three levels (Bronze, Silver and Gold) in order to monitor and assess citizenship competences (figure 3)^{iv}.

Legenda	Bronze		Silver		Gold	
Competences	Competence components					Agreed measures /advices for improvement
C.1. Communication	Students use effectively verbal/ non verbal, oral/ written, communication					
	Students listen and contextualize information					
	Students are able to assert own / positions and listen to the opinion of others					
	Students use consistent and documented argumentation, in their presentations and reporting					
C.2. Emotional intelligence	Students are aware of their local, national, European, global identity					
	Students understand the importance of self esteem/ self confidence					
	Students experience a sense of belonging and commitment					
	Students are aware of their emotions/ feelings and those of the others					
	Students show motivation and interest					
C.3. Active learning	Students are able to regulate their learning, using appropriate tools					
	Students can plan, organise and manage their working time and resources					
	Students work towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance, prioritising actions					
	Students behave in autonomy and responsibility					
C.4. Knowledge and reasoning	Students perform peer tutoring					
	Students are able to information management					
	Students know values, rights and duties /responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society; the concept of democracy; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), art. 12 and 13.					
	K.c. Students perform complex and critical thinking					
C.5. Cooperation / collaboration cooperative learning in groups / school councils	K.d. Students are able to describe how they develop a judgement or take a decision					
	Students behave understanding of the role of the Council/ group and its members keeping autonomy in learning and behaving					
	Students input their ideas, their views and their actions					
	Students master social skills, understand and respect others, deal with conflicts					
C.6. Intercultural awareness and European dimension	Students show solidarity with the disadvantaged and the marginalised					
	Students are aware of and overcome prejudices and stereotypes, working with a range of partners /groups from different backgrounds					
	Students respect social, cultural, religious, age, gender diversities, reject discrimination					
	Students are aware of their national, and European citizenship					
C.7. Leadership	Students break down barriers and misconceptions of the partner countries and foster positive attitudes towards all countries in Europe					
	Students are able to use cooperation skills (C.c.)					
	Students show initiative and entrepreneurship					
	Students practice organisation skills					
C.8. Assessment/ Evaluation for mentoring	Students share democratic decision making and negotiation					
	Assessors are aware of the aims of their assessment work					
	Assessors use appropriat tools (list of itmes) for observation in not mechanic way					
	Assessors pay attention to the context					
	Students use metacognitive skills for self assessment.					

Fig-8. Kite Mark

Source: original intellectual output of the Erasmus+ poject SPACE. Final scientific report

It's a system of assessment and self-assessment intended to learning, the so-called *assessment for learning* (Black and Wiliam, 2004).

The *Tool Kit* offers a roadmap and tools to use in ordinary school activities (case studies, good practices, and helps for implementation strategies) to promote education for active citizenship (Bombardelli, 2016). The *Tool Kit* materials are available on website^v in order to improve the dissemination and application.

4. CONCLUSION

Assuming an active role in school decision-making processes could increase students motivation and intrinsic willingness to act as active citizen in and outside of schools (Feldman *et al.*, 2007; Hess, 2009).

At a more wide level, through participation in the project, all partners (young people, teachers, staff, ...) will be able to enhance their awareness as European citizens and develop their commitment of the democratic process at all levels from individual institution level to European level.

So, democracy is more than a form of government; it is mainly a mode of associated living, a conjoint experience (Dewey, 1916).

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ⁱ Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through school education is one of the core objectives of the “Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training” to 2020.

ⁱⁱ See e.g. Flipped classrooms <https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli7081.pdf>

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^{iv} There is one Kite Mark for the Competences, one for the Student Council. It's be caused by different practices in the Consortium Partner.

^v Italy: <http://events.unitn.it/space>. Project website: <https://spaceproject.cepalcala.org/>