Pre-ACT Activities: ground rules, debates & pupil portfolios

Description

The pre-activities presented below are an integral part of the experimentation protocol. ACT is based on the idea that citizenship education is most effective when students are given the opportunity to act for themselves. In this project, students are asked to implement a concrete "citizenship project". Thus it is essential to prepare them for this type of active pedagogy, before the introduction of the ACT project itself, through the following activities:

- establishing ground rules for small group work and presenting pupil portfolios,
- introducing self and peer evaluation and continued use of the pupil portfolios,
- preparing for in-class debates and voting to solve disagreements,

along with certain habits that will help students to get into the ACT project and the construction of their own citizenship projects.

These pre-activities are transposable to different teaching contexts and different classes. It does not matter when or where they are put in place, only that students are introduced to each of these pre-activities before the 3 introductory lesson plans for ACT.
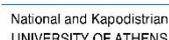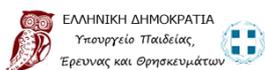
Target group

Teachers involved in ACT

Completion time

NA

Description

This document contains three different activities that may be inserted within any lesson plan, in any subject, prior to the introduction of ACT via the three mandatory lesson plans.

Overview

The following activities should be carried out with the students that will be participating in ACT, prior to implementing the three mandatory lesson plans. While these activities are essential to ensuring that the implementation of ACT can be carried out under the best possible conditions, it is up to the teacher to decide when and how to carry them out with students. It may be, for example, that some of these activities are already a part of a teacher's usual practices; in this case, the teacher can skip ahead to the activities that he or she has not yet done.

Activity 1 – Laying the ground rules for small group work and introducing Student portfolios

Small group work is at the heart of the ACT protocol. Because it is such an essential part of the project and because teachers and students need to be comfortable with this sort of configuration in order to carry out the very first mandatory lesson plan, it is suggested that teachers lay the ground rules for small group work before ACT even begins.

These ground rules should be established collectively by the class and be posted somewhere in the classroom for reference. Whenever students encounter issues in their groups, the teacher can remind them of these rules as a way of guiding their interactions with one another. These rules should also be written or pasted into the dedicated section of each student's Citizenship Experience Portfolio, then signed and dated.

Please refer to **Annex 1** for an example of the sort of activity that could take place with students in order to lead into the preparation of ground rules for working in small groups.

Activity 2 –Introduction to the evaluation charts and continued use of the Student portfolios

The portfolio is a tool that has been created, in part, to allow students and teachers to adopt innovative assessment practices when it comes to the evaluation of students' social and civic competences over the course of the project. The Reference Framework used to elaborate this portfolio is the one created by the Council of Europe in 2015 : *Competences for democratic culture – Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies.*

Along with going through the evaluation charts and guidelines with students, teachers should also have them provide their past "citizenship experiences" by filling in the first two sections of the "About me" part of the portfolio. This should be accomplished before the first mandatory ACT lesson plan.

Please refer to **Annex 2 "Presentation of the Citizenship Portfolio"** and to the Pupil Portfolio document provided in the **ACT Handbook**.

Activity 3 – Preparing for in-class debates and voting to solve disagreements

From beginning to end, ACT is a collaborative, cooperative activity. To be successful, students will have to build consensus and make decisions together. This will inherently involve disagreements and lead to debate. Debates between students in the classroom can be a fraught experience for students and teachers alike. For this reason, it is advised the teachers prepare their students to have respectful, constructive debates before any conflict arises. Voting (in small groups or as a class) as a way of making a decision is a technique that might prove very useful throughout the course of the ACT Project. It is through regular use of this technique that students will become aware of its stakes and implications of decisions taken in such a context

As such, please refer to **Annex 3** for an outline of what the ingredients are for productive debates and what the roles of students and teachers are during such times.

About the annexes…

This annex contains very concrete proposals for the implementation of activities that will facilitate the ACT's introduction. Teachers may choose to try out all of them or to test out only a few, depending on their own teaching methods and what they are already accustomed to doing or not doing with their students. Even these activities, if not already a part of a teacher's repertoire, should wait to be implemented until after the ACT teacher training so that they may be adapted to the specific objectives of the project.

Annex 1

Create an enabling environment for citizenship education
(recommended activity for the success of the protocol)

Time: 45 mins

Expected outcomes:

- Set of rules outlined for conducting the civic project in the classroom;
- Methods used that allow for collaboration and creation of an enabling environment for citizenship education.

1. Encourage discussions among students and help them to know one another.

"Change places if..." activity

- Arrange the classroom: Place students in a circle for them to see each other when they speak.
- For large numbers of students, form several groups and several circles that will be rearranged several times, changing the "change places if..." technique into "change groups if...".
- There is need to start by coming up with a set of questions on everyday life before gradually moving to questions that are more explicitly related to citizenship.
- Example: "Change places..."
- If you had hot chocolate for breakfast;
- If walked to school;
- If you came to school by a means of transport;
- If you watched the news last night;
- If you have a passport;
- If you were born in a country other than your country of nationality;
- If you can speak more than one language;
- If you have travelled outside the European Union;
- If you have ever taken part in a campaign to change something or taken action to improve your local environment.

- **Position of the teacher:**
  - Explains the aim of the activity: Encourages discussions among students and helps them to know one another, creates an enabling work environment.
  - Oversees the proper conduct of the activity, making sure the atmosphere is calm and reassuring students during the deliberations on issues dealing with citizenship.
  - May participate in the activity to help the students build trust and self-confidence.

2. Jointly set working rules for the class, especially for implementation of the civic project

Materials: Post-its or pieces of paper with reusable tape or tablet with digital post-its; A4 with proposed rules.

"Think-pair-share" activity:

This method helps participants to think by themselves, then share their ideas with another person before sharing them with a larger group.

Method with use of post-its:

Step 1: Each student will receive three post-its on which they will write three rules for effective group work.

Step 2: In tandem with another student, they will use 3 post-its to write down 3 rules of their choice.

Step 3: The 3 post-its will be stuck on the board. The teacher will group the post-its by topic and propose rules to be observed if necessary, based on the following example:

Rules:

Each person will take turns to speak.

Show respect to the

person who takes the floor.

You are entitled to disagree,

but you must explain why.

We are active/attentive listeners;

Only raise your hand when one person has finished speaking.

The teacher can then place the post-its on the rules and add information to the list.

The teacher will then ask whether the rules allow for participation of each and every one.

Step 4: The teacher will read aloud the rules and may request a vote by show of hands for each rule to create an inclusive (*e.g. allow a student with a hearing disability to participate by requesting the student who has the floor to speak audibly and in front of their classmate*) and democratic momentum.

Step 5: These rules will be copied, photocopied and put up in several areas of the classroom. The rules are included in the student's portfolio. They may be revised or amended based on experiences or issues that are likely to arise.

- ▪ **Position of the teacher:**
- - Moderates discussions and guides the activity.
- - For instance, through open questions, by asking whether the rules allow each person to participate. Re-initiates discussions in a constructive approach.

3. Additional activity: Deal with sensitive or controversial topics

Before the activity, use the "change places of..." method to either change places in the group or mix the groups.

A new set of questions: "Change places if..."

- If you like television series;
- If you listen to the radio;
- If you usually look for information online;
- If you feel certain topics should not be discussed in class;
- If all topics should be discussed in class.

"Think-pair-share" activity:

Step 1: On a post-it, each student will identify a sensitive or controversial topic they feel is difficult to discuss in class.

Step 2: Have a discussion in tandem on each sensitive topic, following which the duet of students will identify a potential challenge (why it is sensitive or difficult) and a solution that should allow for it to be discussed.

Step 3: On the board, the teacher will group all the sensitive and controversial topics, identify challenges and incentives (summary). He/she defines what is a controversial topic: "a controversial topic is a topic that gives rise to divergent views due to firmly-established beliefs stemming from the values and world view of each person". The teacher's aim is to clearly differentiate between belief and knowledge, and explain that in principle, no topic should be excluded from the classroom. Especially when it comes to addressing sensitive or controversial issues, there is need to listen to and display empathy for the person speaking. The teacher emphasises that no topic should be ruled out provided it does not undermine human dignity or infringe the law (e.g. racist and anti-Semitic statements).

Annex 2

"Citizenship Experience" Portfolio

1. Description of the citizenship portfolio and its purpose

What is the "Citizenship project portfolio"?

The portfolio is a personal document. It is part of the European project in which you are participating. The students of the partner countries who also participate in this project have the same portfolio.

It includes five sections :

1. A presentation of yourself and of your personal experience with citizenship.
2. A presentation of the citizenship project in which you are participating.
3. A page presenting the rules to follow, elaborated by the class.
4. A "GANTT chart" in which you can list the activities that you will carry out for your class's citizenship project as well as the timeline for each of these activities.
5. A skills booklet presenting the skills that you might acquire during the implementation of your citizenship project. It takes into account your self-assessment as well as the assessment of your skills by your classmates (peer assessment) and by your teacher(s).

What is the purpose of this portfolio?

The Citizenship project portfolio allows you to:

- present the work you will carry out for your class's Act citizenship project;
- assess the skills you will develop during this citizenship project (self-assessment, peer assessment and assessment by your teachers) for the purpose of making progress on them during the school year.

The teacher invites the students to use the portfolio during the different ACT project activities.

Suggested use to introduce students to the portfolio in practical terms :

During the pre-activities (Activity 1 – Creating a safe space…), the teacher can ask the pupils to organise a peer review or to evaluate themselves after having set the rules to be followed and by selecting some items (for example : Attitudes / demonstrating tolerance and respect towards convictions, cultural practices and opinions which differ from one's own, or Skills / Communication / Be able to listen and make exchanges between colleagues, teachers and members of another team). These criteria can be assessed again on the occasion of collective debates.

Annexe 3
Holding a regulated or argued debate

Principles and invariants

In a democracy, debate holds an inherent position in the public space. As a democratic practice, debate seeks to reach a compromise or a consensus on the basis of a divergence of points of view, or even of conflict. A consequence of freedom of expression is acceptance of these disagreements, which are expressed in debate. However, it should not entertain the idea that all opinions are equal. The expression of different points of view must respect the values of democracy and relate to the legal framework that organises this freedom. In particular, the practice of debate facilitates the construction of moral judgement and citizenship among students. In this sense, it is a key element of citizenship education.

Debate is a way for any individual to express his/her point of view within the framework of a rules-based exchange. It is a discussion between different people about a controversial issue, in which every participant must know how to master his/her own speech, give way to that of others, understand the point of view of others even when he/she does not share it and try to convince others through arguing. It is therefore an exchange from which each participant can benefit and not a confrontation with a winner and a loser.

Challenges and learning objectives for students (knowledge, skills, attitudes)

The practice of debate to be favoured in class is that of the argued debate in which rules are obeyed, guaranteeing its democratic framework and respect of the right of each participant to express his/her opinion. Student objectives are:

- Intellectual: to arrive at a common answer to the question posed on the basis of answers that are different and yet equal in dignity
- Civic: to take into account the thoughts of others (respect, listening, resumption, integration, refutation, etc.) and, ideally, to provide a common answer to an initial question (identification and consideration of the public interest).
- Practical: to learn to use linguistic and communication tools, for example through analysing 'real' expert debates from the television or radio.

Approaches

- Choose the initial question: there are several ways in which to do this, for example by allowing an issue to emerge by bringing the students together, choosing a question from a pre-established list or allowing one to emerge from a document or performance. The idea is to identify a controversial question, a shared experience among the students or a fact from current affairs.
- Develop the argument based on exchanges, documentary research, etc.
- Prepare the debate: plan out the debate space, the rules and, in particular, the rule of speaking and respecting one another. Role distribution: moderator, time keeper, etc. There are three possible approaches: the students choose their own option, defend an opinion drawn from a lot or defend one that is contrary to their own. The objective is to develop intellectual agility and respect for different points of view.

Assessment Proposal

My debating approach	Assessment criteria
Attitudes	- I listen to my classmates' arguments
Values	- I take the same amount of time to listen to all my classmates.
Aptitudes	- I justify my position with arguments. - I take part in debates. - I take into account and respect the arguments of others. - I ask for the floor. - I express myself properly and calmly. - I am able to change my mind to take into account the general interest.
Knowledge	- My arguments are based on core values.
Group management of debates	- The debate was conducted to the end. - Arguments have been justified and cross-checked. - The aims of the debate were achieved and used to make decisions to advance the project.

Activity:

The teacher may organize a debate on a subject (chosen by the students, by the teacher or linked to a current event). The teacher relies on the approach described above. Students should be asked to respect the ground rules that they defined as a class and which should be visible in the classroom.

At the end of the debate, the teacher should ask students to self-assess themselves on two or three of the items described in the portfolio using the criteria table above.

Then the teacher should ask students, either in partners or in small groups, to peer evaluate one another by again relying on the above table.

Finally, the teacher may also assess students on these same items and provide constructive feedback regarding the results of this assessment process.