Implementing ACT project in the classroom : good practices and examples

Description

The way in which each class's citizenship project will be carried out largely depends on its content – objectives, activities, final products, etc. Nevertheless, there are some classroom activities that may be useful for any class, regardless of the chosen project. These activities relate to both the way in which the class can approach the planning stages of the project and to the challenges that each class is likely to encounter during the implementation period. The following activities may be used by ACT teachers, as necessary, during project implementation. These activities are optional

Target group

Teachers involved in ACT

Completion time

NA
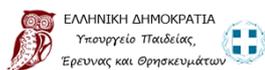
Activity 1 (30 minutes)

What do we know ? What do we need to know ?

Objective

This activity is designed to help students take stock of their knowledge on the theme that was chosen by the classroom, and to understand what knowledge they should develop to implement the project.

Organisational modalities

The class is divided into small groups.

Material

Large sheets of paper, markers, chart from Activity 3 in Lesson 3

Descriptio n of the activity

The teacher recalls the project that was chosen by the class.

The teacher divides the class into 4 or 6 groups (depending on the number of students), according to the students' choice. It is important to mix the previous groups to create a new dynamic. The students from the winning group can be divided into the other groups.

There must be two or three "brainstorming" groups and two or three "cause and effect" groups.

1) **The students of he "brainstorming" groups** are invited to reflect on their own knowledge about the chosen project, to share any relevant experience with the rest of the group, to ask any question he/she would like to get an answer to

The group can write the outcomes of the discussion down on a paper sheet , divided as such :

What we already know / what do we need to know

Example : if the project is to make a video on discrimination, the pupils take stock of what they know about this subject. The teacher regulates the exchanges, invites them to formulate questions.

2) **The "cause and effect" groups**: the teacher invites the pupils to reflect on the causes and consequences of the problem. The objective of this activity is to help students to identify the potential impact of their project, if they take action upstream (on the causes) or downstream (on the consequences)

Example :

Origin of the project : discrimination against disabled people.

Causes : lack of general knowledge on disabilities, fear of difference, indifference, lack of empathy, individualism

Consequences : unequal access to property rights, public transportation, employment ; mockeries.

Activity 2 (30 minutes)

Research

Objectives

This activity will foster pupils' understanding of the importance to deepen and develop their knowledge on the subject chosen for the ACT classroom project. They will also understand why it is an important step in the project's process and how they should organize themselves so that it does not take too long.

Organisational modalities

The previous activity has to be completed and pupils should be provided with the written records of the brainstorming groups.

This activity is carried out in a group setting.

Material

Large sheets of paper, markers, grid of the activity 3 of the lesson 3.

Description

The teacher distributes one of the questions raised during the previous activity to each group, ask them to think about it and to make researches. Researches can be continued outside the classroom.

The teacher sets the framework and invites the pupils to ask themselves, in a citizenship perspective, what the government already does to solve the problem, which laws already exist, if there are some organizations or associations dealing with that problem and how they proceed. This questioning allows the pupils to identify more precisely where and at which level they can act.

At the end of the activity, the teacher can synthetize the elements provided.

Activity 3 (30 minutes)

Bringing the ACT project into life: planning, division of actions

Step 1. Now that project has been chosen and further defined, it is time to define an implementation strategy. Students can first be asked to make a complete list of the principal tasks that must be carried out in order to achieve the project's objectives.

When creating this list, teachers should help to ensure that each task contributes to the overall objective(s) and that it is feasible in terms of time and resources.

This activity can be carried out in groups or as a class.

Step 2. Once the list has been established, the teacher asks the pupils to build a schedule of activities.

PROJECT (reminder of what you want to do)			
Human resources and material Which equipments do you need? Do you need a budget? How to find it? Do you need an outside help? What kind of? How to reach it?	**Schedule of activities and actions**		
	What is to be done ?	**Who will do it ?**	**For when should it be done ?**

Step 3 : Students can now be asked divide the above-detailed tasks into as many "activity clusters" as there are small groups in the class.

For example, in the project of a video to fight against discrimination against disables people, the roles could be the following ones:

Scripters –write the script and / or the story board
Actors and the team – play in the film and deal with accessories and costumes
Composers and singers – compose and perform the song
Directors - produce the film and the song
Technicians – film the video and record the song
Producers – find a shooting location, ask for the legal authorizations, advertise

The roles are defined according to the objectives, the scope of the project and the number of students who will work on the project during the school year.

It is also important to note that these roles are not set in stone and may be changed over the course of project implementation. They may be modified over the course of project implementation, depending on how things are going, to finish the project in time or to solve any conflict.

The teacher should regularly provide an overview with the pupils to review every task necessary for the project's realization.

The Teacher's Role

Throughout this phase, the role of the teacher is to accompany the implementation of the chosen citizenship project, as a facilitator, by helping students to question themselves and to deepen their reflections and proposals. The aim of this sort of questioning is to help dispel any confusion among students by reformulating things to make sure that everyone has understood what they are proposing, developing, creating, etc.

The teacher is in charge of regulating exchanges between students and mediating conflicts, whenever the situation demands it.

The teacher is also responsible for maintaining a calm and respectful classroom environment for everyone. He/she is also the guardian of the knowledge and information that circulates through the classroom and must confirm or overturn any falsehoods.

As a facilitator, the teacher should not impose her/his own point of view on students, nor should he/she do the thinking or acting in place of the students.

1. **The teacher should ask open-ended questions.**
   For example, rather than "you should…" or "have you thought about doing…", it would be better to help students consider their options for themselves and find their own solutions to issues that arise during project implementation. A teacher's questions could therefore be more along the lines of "how do you imagine…" or "in your opinion, did you identify everything that you need to do for [insert activity]?" or "concretely, how have you planned for this to be carried out?"

2. **The teacher should encourage students to take a vote, in the event that they are in a disagreement over a choice that they must make.**
   For example, if students have to make a choice between one video format or another – filming a news programme or doing interviews, the teacher could suggest that they take a vote on the matter. Regularly taking a vote when there are disagreements requires that students learn how to argue their point of view. It also gets students accustomed to the idea that once a vote has been performed, the decision is final and cannot be addressed again.

3. **The teacher should help guide students towards the resources that they might need.**

For example, the teacher can suggest websites to consult, places that could be used for filming the video, people that should be contacted, etc. Students should nevertheless be given time to think of these things themselves before the teacher steps in with her/his suggestions.

4. **The teacher should regularly bring the entire class together to discuss how the project is going.**
For example, the teacher can position her/himself as the person to which the project and related actions should be explained. If there is a need for clarification, the teacher can ask students for more concrete details. The teacher may have to remind students of important deadlines.

5. **The teacher should regularly organize evaluation time to allow students to carry out self-or peer-assessments.**
Along with organizing self- and peer-assessment periods, the teacher should also regularly evaluate students on their progress regarding the skills and competencies identified in the citizenship project portfolios.