



# PRACTICE

Preventing Radicalism through Critical Thinking Competences

## TEACHERS HANDBOOK

### GUIDELINES FOR PREVENTION WORK

*INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT #3*

*PRACTICE-SCHOOLEU*



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



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*INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT #3*

2021



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This Teacher's Handbook is part of a series of publications published as open resources in **PRACTICE – Pre-venting Radicalism through Critical Thinking Competences**, a project funded by the Erasmus+ Pro-gramme – Key Action 2: Strategic Partnership in the field of education (Project No. 2015-1-IT02-KA201-015383).

The PRACTICE project wants to respond to the need for new teaching methods, applicable to diverse learners with the aim of preventing radicalisation. The Teacher's Handbook serves to facilitate the use of the comprehensive pedagogical-didactic material collection, which under the title "Radicalization Prevention Programme" has been developed in the **PRACTICE** project and published on the project's website in both an online version and a pdf version<sup>1</sup>.

The Teacher's Handbook aims to provide guidelines for teachers who want to implement methods and teaching/learning activities from the Prevention Programme in their teaching. Thus, the aim is to give teachers advice and guidance in terms of:

- *Testing peer-based learning processes, where students through their collaboration show mutual recognition and respect for differences.*
- *Strengthening awareness of signs in the classroom of lack of wellbeing, exclusion and alienation.*
- *Introduction of radicalisation and other sensitive phenomena in the classroom.*
- *Supporting teachers' insight into school political and teaching methodological issues across EU Member States.*

## 1.1 - SCHOOL AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR BOTH STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

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Bearing these objectives in mind, the **PRACTICE** Teacher's Handbook provides guiding materials to support teachers' in the active use of the **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme, thereby contributing to an ongoing professional qualification of teachers around Europe. This approach is an important focal point of the **PRACTICE** project and has its origins in the **PARIS DECLARATION**<sup>2</sup> for the promotion of citizenship and the common values: freedom, tolerance and anti-discrimination through education.

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<sup>1</sup> Find all project materials on the website: [practice-school.eu](http://practice-school.eu), under the section RESOURCES.

<sup>2</sup> The total title is: "Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education".

According to the 2015 Declaration, EU Member States must contribute to meeting the common objectives by sharing good practice aimed to:

- *Ensure that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and anti-discrimination, as well as active citizenship.*
- *Promote critical thinking and media literacy, especially in the use of the Internet and social media, thus to develop resilience and resistance to all forms of discrimination and indoctrination.*
- *Promote the education of disadvantaged children and young people by ensuring that the education system meets the needs of children and young people.*
- *Promote intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in collaboration with other relevant policy areas and stakeholders.*

Even though the Paris Declaration in the common goals focuses on the socialization, schooling and upskilling of children and young people it is important to note that the Declaration also focuses on the **teacher side** by pointing to the great importance of giving high priority to teacher training and a professional qualification that matches the requirements and expectations placed on their teaching of children and young people. It is the teachers who, through the daily pedagogical-didactic practice, have the task of **translating** the common European goals into a teaching that manages to engage the students and open their eyes to the meaning of the concepts in the common goals. This is not merely a question of offering students a theoretical-conceptual introduction and then “ticking” the fulfillment of the task. On the contrary, it is very much a question of ensuring that students, on both a cognitive and emotional level, gain empathy and personal understanding of what citizenship and civic responsibility mean, what inclusion and anti-discrimination entail, what it means to think critically etc.

In that sense, the school is a learning environment for **both the students and for the teachers**. This point is precisely the focal point of the **PRACTICE** project, where CPD - Continuous Professional Development - is a key concept for the development and dissemination of pedagogical-didactic methods and teaching activities in support of teachers’ work to promote the European values of the Paris Declaration. Consequently, through CPD, the goal is to qualify teachers continuously in ways to provide educational efforts that can strengthen the wellbeing of students in school and be a safeguard against involvement in vulnerable youth environments, which in worst case can lead young people towards crime and even further to violent radicalisation and extremism.

## 1.2 - THE SCHOOL AS FRAME FOR PREVENTION

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Against this background, violence and radicalisation plays a central role in the PRACTICE project and consequently in the PRACTICE Prevention Programme. However, it is worth emphasizing that in addition to the Prevention Programme's thorough introduction to the concept of radicalisation and the consequences of violent radicalisation and extremism of both political and religious observance - the PRACTICE project and the Prevention Programme focus on radicalisation as a societal phenomenon, which in rare cases may be at stake in everyday life in school. To the extent that this is the case, the school must institutionally be prepared to make a pedagogical effort to counteract radicalisation in an interdisciplinary collaboration with other authorities. But at the preventive level, the school should first and foremost carry out its basic pedagogical function and work actively and systematically to prevent lack of wellbeing, adaptability difficulties and other risk factors among the students.

## 1.3 - STRUCTURE OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

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The present **PRACTICE** Teacher's Handbook is a supportive material for teachers in secondary schools who wish to use the materials in **PRACTICE Prevention Programme**. The Teachers' Handbook expands the Prevention Programme with short introductory texts, conceptual guidelines and supplementary good practice examples on teaching materials which link the Prevention Programme to the school context and teachers' practical teaching assignment.

Thus, the Teacher's Handbook does not present specific teaching guides for the implementation of the individual teaching/learning activities in the Prevention Programme. Instead, the specific teaching guides are to be found in the Prevention Programme itself, in order to maintain a close and direct connection between methods, teaching activities and methodical guides for the sake of readability.

Instead, as a supplement, the Teachers' Handbook summarizes and put into perspective the concepts of the Prevention Programme and provides them with pedagogical-didactic considerations and approaches to support the practical implementation in the school's teaching/learning environment.

Against this background, the **PRACTICE** Teacher's Handbook is structured as follows:

**Chapter 2** provides, under the title "An introduction to the structure in the Prevention Programme", a comprehensive overview of the structure in the programme. The chapter illustrates how the programme is divided into two main parts, and how the main parts are conceptually and thematically interconnected. Chapter 2 is thus also a

short reading guide to the extensive material in the Prevention Programme.

**Chapter 3** focuses under the title “Radicalisation and prevention in the school’s learning environment - what frameworks and functions” on two of the central concepts in the Prevention Programme, namely radicalisation and prevention. The chapter sheds light on how the school plays a crucial role in the general prevention efforts and discusses how the school must support the resilience of students towards radicalisation processes.

**Chapter 4**, entitled “Critical thinking in the school’s learning environment - between reason and emotion”, explains the position of critical thinking in the school’s socialization of students into critical thinking citizens. The chapter briefly introduces different pedagogical traditions to promote critical thinking and highlights the need to strengthen the school’s democratic ethos and make the school a community without discrimination and exclusion for both students and teachers.

**Chapter 5**, entitled “Digital awareness in the school’s learning environment - between a virtual and actual world”, discusses the school’s major task of equipping students to be critical and resilient to the bombardment of information and propaganda which followed in the wake of the digital revolution in both society and schools.

**Chapter 6** describes under the title “Intercultural awareness in the school’s learning environment - pro-moting the identity of citizenship” the intercultural perspective, which, like the other concepts, plays an important role in the Paris Declaration. The chapter illustrates the close connection between interculturality, diversity and a citizenship that strengthens students’ positive sense of identity, tolerance and care for each other.

**Chapter 7** deals under the title “Global conflict management - when the world casts shadows into the learning environment” with the impact that international conflicts can directly or indirectly have on the learning environment and students’ mutual support and understanding of the diversity in a class. The chapter provides examples of how school is sometimes the setting for a global conflict management between students when global conflicts in other parts of the world find their way into the classroom.

**Chapter 8** concludes the Handbook with a brief summary of the most important learning points and conclusions from the **PRACTICE** project, as presented in the Teacher’s Handbook.

## 2. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUCTURE OF THE PRACTICE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

### 2.1 - INTRODUCTION

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*“...A field research with interviews and focus groups has been implemented, involving more than 105 teachers, school’s directors, professionals and stakeholders: this action has been crucial to detect and analyze the needs of the educational sector in terms of skills & competencies to be developed in teachers and students in order to prevent radicalisation processes. Moreover, some specific topics and thematic areas have been identified as particularly relevant to be addressed: this will allow to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and self-confidence to involve students in discussing topical subjects and controversial issues that – without a critical approach – can lead to mislead perspective, polarised positions and extreme views....”<sup>3</sup>.*

As can be seen from the quote above from the Prevention Programme, the content of the programme is the result of an extensive research which constituted a first step in the **PRACTICE** project. Thus, all seven partner organizations initially conducted interviews among a wide range of teachers, school principals and other stakeholders with interfaces to the national school systems. An important focal point in all interviews was the question about schools’ and teachers’ experiences in terms of violent radicalisation processes, especially among older students. However, this basic question did not stand alone in the interviews. The informants were also asked to assess the needs and requirements for knowledge and teaching/learning methodologies linked to the contemporary development, where students may be exposed to extremist propaganda - especially via social media - and where there may be cases where individual students are attracted to and engaged in extremist environments.

The answers and experiences from the many interviews pointed in various directions. However, as a consistent result only a few teachers and schools were previously confronted with open extremist attitudes and behaviours of a nature that would lead the mind in the direction of violent and criminal radicalisation processes among students. On the other hand, several informants argued that measures such as strengthened teaching on topics such as diversity, tolerance, anti-discrimination, active citizenship and critical thinking may in both the short and long term counteract violent radicalisation and extremism among students. At the same time, the informants advocated for the schools’ **general prevention task**.

In summary, this is a task that is at the heart of the **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme, and the following sections explain how the results of the initial research among

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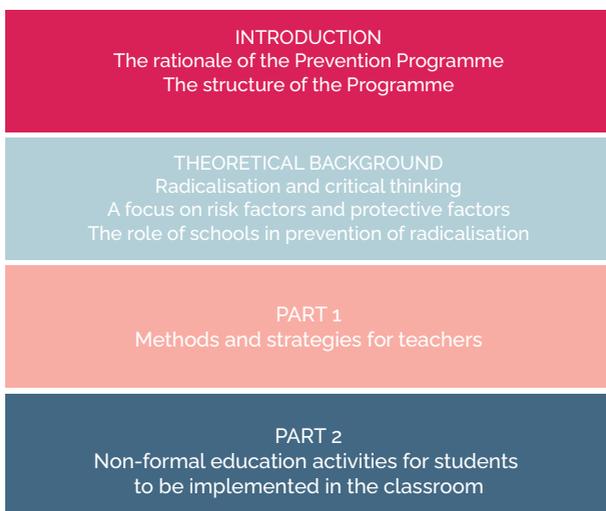
<sup>3</sup> Quoted from the PRACTICE Prevention Programme, 2019

professionals were translated into a programme aimed at meeting the professional considerations, recommendations and needs for professional upskilling. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the results must be seen as the sum of both similarities and differences in the needs for pedagogical retraining across partner countries. Thus, the aim was to bridge all expressed needs and add to the programme the widest possible relevance for teachers all over Europe.

## 2.2 - THE STRUCTURE AND MODULES IN THE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

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The figure draws an overview of the overall structure and main elements of the **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme:



The introduction presents readers to the rationale behind the creation and construction of the Programme with reference to the Paris Declaration, which together with the initial needs survey among teachers and other school professionals formed the basis for the programme's objectives:

- *The development of an innovative CPD programme on prevention of radicalization in schools*
- *The empowerment of teachers through capacity-building aimed to equip them with methods and tools addressing diversity in the classroom, and furthermore to increase teachers' understanding of radicalization processes and their management in educational settings.*

- *The enhancement among students of critical thinking skills, as well as the strengthening of students' understanding of citizenship and common values such as freedom, tolerance and anti-discrimination.*
- *The fostering of a safe space in schooling settings in terms of ensuring mutual respect for equality across religious, socio-economic and socio-cultural affiliations among the students.*

Next, the theoretical chapter includes an introduction to the core concepts of radicalisation, critical thinking and the role of schools in prevention efforts. Based on the theoretical introduction, the Prevention Programme is further structured in two main parts:

**PART 1** presents strategic teaching/learning approaches and methods to support teachers' pedagogical planning of teaching activities aimed to qualify and socialize students to be able to:

- *Establish and maintain democratic and respectful communities.*
- *Understand and respect the fundamental importance of diversity and values such as intercultural understanding, anti-discrimination, tolerance and equality in school as well as in society in general.*

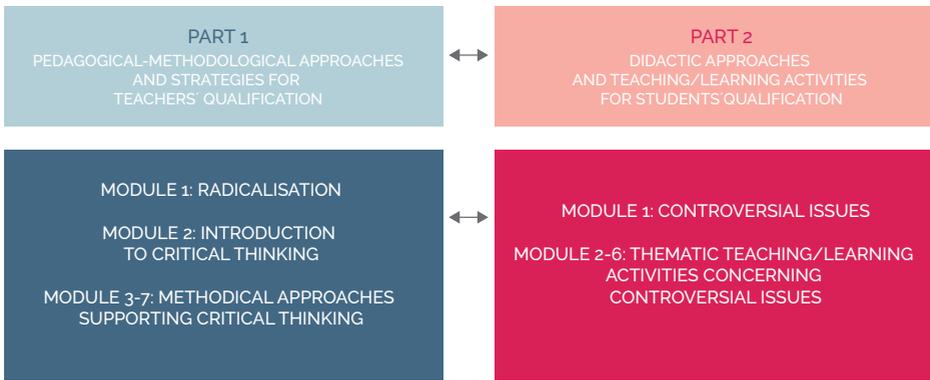
Thereby, this part focuses on the **PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE** and **GENERAL METHODOLOGIES** to work strategically to promote communities, democratic thinking, understanding of diversity and equality, etc.

**PART 2** presents concrete didactic examples of teaching/learning activities which teachers can use in the classroom and in the practical teaching to train students in terms of:

- *Democratic rules of conduct.*
- *Intercultural understanding and respect for diversity and differences*

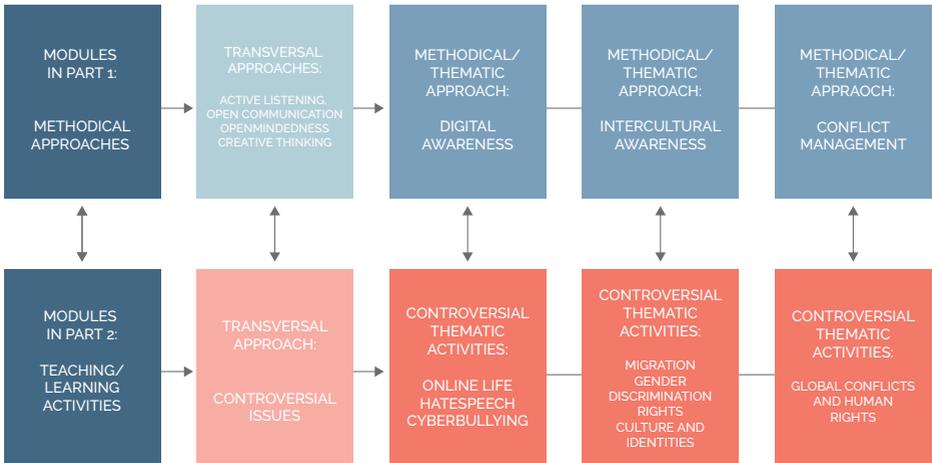
This part has its emphasis in the **DIDACTIC PERSPECTIVE** and **THEMATIC TEACHING METHODS** to train students in societal and controversial themes, which to varying degrees from country to country affect the school's upskilling, general socialisation and prevention among the students.

In summary, the programme structure is illustrated in the figure below:

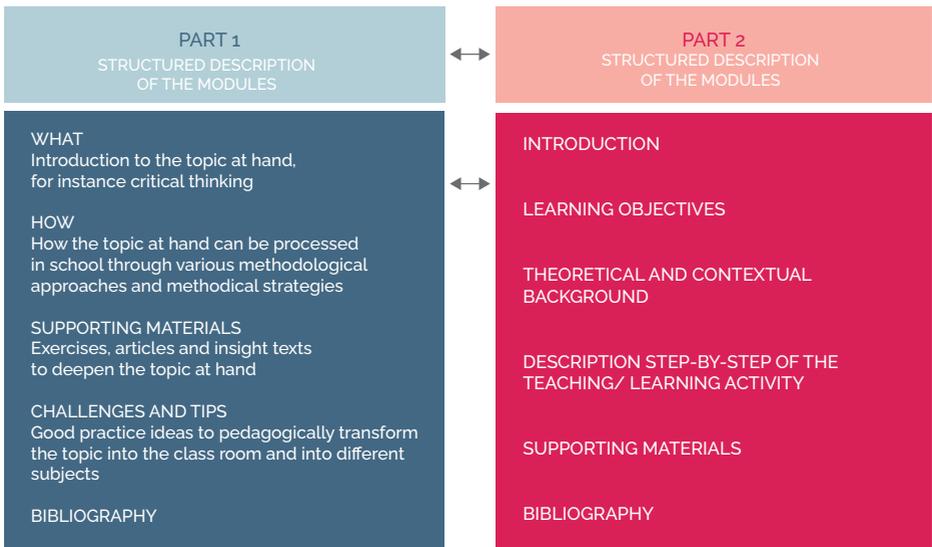


The following figure below concretizes the content of the modules and their coherence across the two main parts. As can be seen from the figure, the transverse modules introduce to the following thematic modules. PART 1 consists of three thematic modules, each with its own pedagogical-methodological approach to prevention. In PART 2, the modules with thematic teaching/learning activities match the thematic approaches in PART 1.

As an example, teachers and students with special interest in the digital area can review the module on “digital awareness” in PART 1 and then test the teaching/activities in PART 2 within the module on online life, hate speech and cyberbullying. The other thematic approaches and activities can work in the same way:



Finally, the next figure shows how the modules in PART 1 and PART 2 are structured according to uniform dispositions, thus to facilitate the search for the same questions across the modules, for example sections on supplementary materials:





# 3. RADICALISATION AND PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - WHAT FRAMEWORK AND FUNCTIONS?

## 3.1 - INTRODUCTION

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*“...What is more, schools and teachers are on the front line to help identify and safeguard youth at risk of radicalisation. They are essential partners in preventing and countering violent radicalization at early stages...(…) Schools can play an important role in building resilient contexts for vulnerable youngsters by nurturing the communicative, social and emotional skills needed to tackle the challenges of adolescence and by providing the spaces in which to do so safely...”<sup>4</sup>*

By this quote, the authors place schools in a central position in terms of the general European - and global - efforts against violent radicalisation and extremism among young people. Behind the report is RAN, the European Commission’s Radicalisation Awareness Network, which since 2011 has been the central body for the EU Member States’ coordinated efforts to counter radicalisation and extremism of both political and religious observance and furthermore, with both Islamist, right-wing extremist and left-wing extremist signs, as they appeared in Europe and the rest of the world for decades.

The quote affirms that the school and teachers as front institutions and front staff are necessary coplayers in the fight against radicalisation. However, the question is **how** this role should be defined and filled in the overall effort. Here is a signal in the title itself, where the school is referred to as a **laboratory for democracy** (cf. note 4 below). In this context, democracy is not just a question of a governmental form. Democracy must be seen as a fundamental code of conduct, values and behavior that urges all citizens to meet each other with openness and a positive exchange of perspectives, even when attitudes and disagreements are at stake. In other words, the school must have a strong **democratic ethos**, where school leadership, teachers and students always credibly adhere to values such as equality, solidarity and community, respect for diversity and differences, anti-discrimination and inclusive behavior.

From this perspective, the school - and other educational institutions - constitute the social and professional laboratory for democracy, where children and youth qualify for many years through schooling and later education. As a democratic laboratory with a democratic ethos, the school’s preventive function goes far beyond the statutory obligation to teach students about the concept of democracy, forms of government

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Nordbruch, Götz and Sieckelinck, Stijn (2018): “Transforming schools into labs for democracy. A companion to preventing violent radicalization through education. For RAN, Radicalisation Awareness Network.

and electoral acts, etc. The Laboratory for Democracy concerns precisely the school's opportunities to practice democratic manners and communities among students - and actually teachers as well. Through the power of example, the school must convey the basic attitudes, values and practices that are connected to the concept of democracy as respect for diversity and equality, anti-discrimination, inclusion, etc. The strengthening of these democratic values belongs on both a cognitive and emotional level to the school's pedagogical and socializing function similar to learning in mathematics, language, geography, biology, etc.

Ultimately, with its democratic ethos, the school must contribute to strengthening the resilience among the students, which step by step must make them active and empathetic fellow citizens. The poorer the school is at supporting students' resilience, the greater the vulnerability and risks in terms of students becoming involved in subversive and anti-social environments and groups. Therefore, the concepts of resilience factors and risk factors go hand in hand with the concept of prevention.

Against this background, the following shed light on the school's preventive role, which is the basis for the **PRACTICE** project. For a more detailed understanding of the concepts of radicalisation and prevention in the project.

### 3.2 - RADICALISATION IN SCHOOL – MYTH OR REALITY?

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*“Extremism refers to individuals and environments that use violence or legitimize the use of violence as a political means and form of action. Radicalization refers to the process by which individuals gradually or suddenly join extremist mindsets and/or violent or violent legitimating forms of action. Radicalization in this sense can be either attitudinal, action-oriented or both...”<sup>5</sup>*

In the initial research of the **PRACTICE** project, it was remarkable that the majority of school informants claimed to have no experience in terms of cases of violent radicalisation and extremism among students. In general, the informants did not recognize radicalisation among students as a visible, let alone intrusive problem. Other schools and teachers will probably be able to join this experience. Seen in this light, many teachers and youth workers might ask whether radicalisation processes in school is a myth or a reality.

Previous studies among schools, teachers and other youth workers likewise concluded that it is necessary to define the concept of radicalisation more precisely if schools are to be equipped to carry out effective prevention work. In a Danish study, for example, a large number of teachers and youth workers stated that they could not identify radicalisation processes without having a clear picture of how the radicalisation

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<sup>5</sup> Mhtconsult and the City of Copenhagen (2013): “Netværk til fælles læring – et inspirationskatalog til inklusion og forebyggelse blandt ungemedarbejdere”. Title in English: “Network for common Learning – an inspirational catalogue for inclusion and prevention among youthworkers”

process could be defined and placed on a development scale where the end point could be violent extremism and in the extreme case, terrorism. The concern among the professionals was in particular the risk of suspecting and stigmatizing young people's fully legal views, expressions and communities. But a further concern was also that suspicion could lead to a breach of the **bridges of trust** that both teachers and other frontline workers cautiously built towards vulnerable students and young people who already felt excluded and alienated from prevailing norms, values and relationships in the school environment and in society generally. A further stumbling block was the fear among many frontline workers of **confusing** the democratic right to have radicalist and critical views with radicalisation processes, where young people legitimize violent forms of action and declare themselves ready to undermine the liberal democracy by violent/militant means<sup>6</sup>. Thus, the struggle against subversive radicalisation processes must not become a showdown with the democratic right and legitimacy to assert radical political-ideological and religious views within the framework of liberal democracy.

In summary, the understanding and definition of the concept of radicalisation thus moves on a difficult balancing act: **on the one hand**, it must ensure that both schools, media and political decision-makers maintain a sober approach to young people's expressions, so as not to create myths and unnecessary suspicion about young people's radical subcultures and communities. But **on the other hand**, it must also ensure that there is a professional attention to worrying behavior. Both teachers and other professionals with close and frequent contact with students and young people must be prepared to react when a student is gradually excluded or excludes himself/herself/themselves from the circle of peers, shows weak or stronger signs of lack of well-being, lack of involvement in school's social life and learning environment, insidious signs of discouragement and introversion, etc.

In such cases, the school has a responsibility and an obligation to act. But when will this obligation take effect, and how should the school and teachers act? Where are the boundaries of the school's responsibility, and with whom can the school collaborate? These are all questions that are closely linked to the school's framework and functions in the prevention efforts.

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<sup>6</sup> Jf Nordbruch, Götz og Sieckelinck, Stijn, op.cit 2018 and mhtconsult: (2010 + 2011): "Måltrettet inklusion skaber aktivt medborgerskab". Title in English: "Targeted inclusion promotes active citizenship". For the City of Copenhagen.

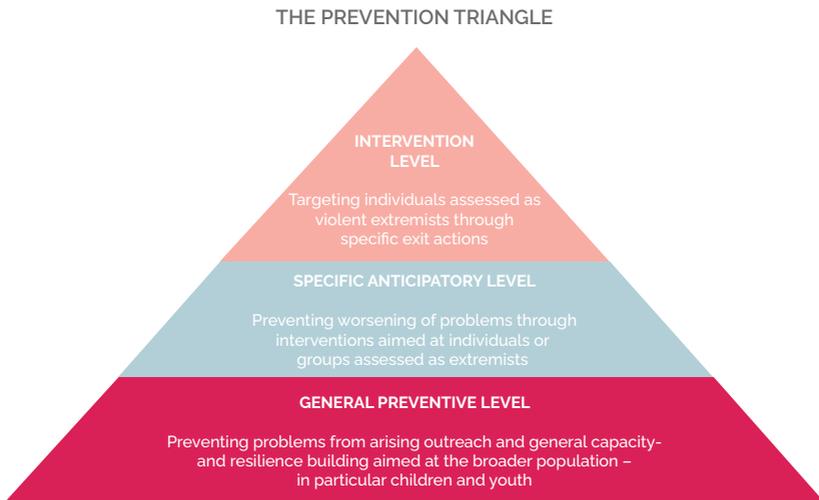
### 3.3 - PREVENTION IN SCHOOL – WHAT LEVEL?

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*“...It is vital to reach children and young citizens and support them in their development process, so that they are prepared to take part in and share the responsibilities, rights and duties of a democratic society. An initiative here must be broadly preventive, e.g. teaching in civics and religion can be strengthened to help pupils learn about democratic opportunities for having influence on their own lives and to engage in society...”<sup>7</sup>*

The notion that schools and educational institutions can play an important role in the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism has gained more and more ground in recent years. One step along the way was the UN Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism<sup>8</sup>, which emphasized the strong importance of schooling and education in building the resilience of children and young people. It reinforces the need to determine the level of prevention at which schools can operate in practice.

The figure below shows the so-called **prevention triangle**, which has been used to illustrate the different levels of prevention efforts for many years<sup>9</sup>. The triangle is available in several versions, but what they have in common is that they operate with three main levels:



<sup>7</sup> Quoted from The City of Copenhagen and an expert group (2016): “Less radicalisation through an effective and co-herent effort”. See also: UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015), <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/SCR-2250>.

<sup>8</sup> Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2014). Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674) [http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178\\_2014\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Jf The City of Copenhagen, op.cit 2016.

**The top level** concerns the efforts of police and security authorities on people who are already in extremist circles and have embarked on a criminal career. An exit strategy to get them out of the environments may in some cases involve social authorities and educational actors, but will not affect schools.

**The middle level** focuses on children and young people who are particularly vulnerable and in some cases also in the risk zone for violent radicalisation and affiliation to extremist or other criminal environments such as gangs. The anticipatory effort aims to get the young people out of these contexts and stop their radicalisation in the bud.

**The lower level** is the field where all children and young people need - and are entitled to - thrive and develop their personal, social, relational, professional skills and resources, thus they learn to think critically and be part of positive communities for the common good in society. This is the level where the school enters the picture as an active player in the prevention work.

### 3.4 - NECESSARY TO COLLABORATE ACROSS SECTORS

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At the same time, this means that the school has a great **co-responsibility** for ensuring that children and young people do not thrive so badly and have such poor resilience that it is necessary to take action at the intermediate level, where comprehensive social measures often have to be supplemented by safety measures.

Schools do not always with timely care spot a lack of well-being which reached such a deep point that the student seeks recognition and community in radicalized and criminal environments. Experts are generally debating whether it is possible to identify signs of violent radicalisation that could be a guideline for schools and teachers when they are concerned about a student. However, it is possible to mention some general points of attention, which should always be used with caution in order to avoid that a vulnerable student turns his/her/their back on the school and moves into a deeper radicalization process:

- *Signs of readiness for violence, including through violent clashes with other students*
- *Interest in foreign conflicts and desire to join through training with extreme groups*
- *Traffic and activity on websites and other media with extremist and violent content*
- *Threats and harassment against other students and groups*
- *Participation in events characterized by hate speech and legitimization of violence*
- *Contemptuous and intolerant attitude towards other groups, perhaps combined with moralizing behavior*

- *Increasing use of external and totalitarian symbols, possibly combined with changed dress*
- *Increased isolation from family and previous friends in favor of new communities*

It is important to emphasize that such signs cannot in themselves determine whether a student is embarking on a process of political/ideological/religious radicalisation. But as school and as teacher, you can represent the security and confidentiality that gives access to a closer discussion with the student. In addition, the need for cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration with other governmental and local institutions and individuals, such as social workers, psychologists, family coaches and, in some European countries, the police, should be emphasized<sup>10</sup>.

### 3.5 - RISK AND RESILIENCE – FOCAL POINTS IN SCHOOL

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The concepts of risk factors and resilience factors have had a prominent position in the general research and debate about the reasons behind young people's attraction to violent extremist environments. Although it is generally agreed that it is too complicated to identify specific causal factors behind the radicalisation processes, it is relevant as well as necessary to focus on risk and resilience factors in the general prevention that schools and teachers help to maintain.

The table on the next page describes various expressions of risk and resilience factors. The list may provide a guideline for the conditions that either develop or counteract the vulnerability of children and youth across socio-economic and socio-cultural environments<sup>11</sup>. Many of these conditions will be familiar to the school from, among other things, the collaboration with parents, from inquiries by social authorities and from the individual student's own behaviour etc. However, some conditions will be more hidden, and the prerequisite for effective prevention work is very much about maintaining a high level of awareness that must include all students in school.

In literature about radicalisation and extremism, the concepts of **push-and-pull factors** frequently appear as expressions of the mechanisms that push young people towards extremist environments or, conversely, hold them back, even though they may be attracted. Risk factors and resilience factors can in a way be equated with the push-and-pull factors, because special vulnerability or resilience can work in the same way for the individual student.

<sup>10</sup> For instance the Danish SSP-system, which is an institutional and solid and law-based collaboration across local Schools, Social authorities and Police all over the country.

<sup>11</sup> Thomsen, Margit Helle (2020): "Fra frafald til fastholdelse i erhvervsuddannelserne. Et udviklings- og forskningsprojekt til tilvejebringelse af nye fastholdelsesmetoder over for udsatte elever". Title in English: "From drop-out to retention in vocational education. A development and research project to provision of new retention methodol-ogies towards vulnerable students".

Therefore, the school has a key function in keeping an eye on the development in the students' individual risk and resilience conditions, so that changes in a dangerous direction are made visible.

	RISK FACTORS	RESILIENCE FACTORS
INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult temperament and extroverted behavior</li> <li>• Cognitive and learning challenges and problems</li> <li>• Insufficient social competences</li> <li>• Lack of self-esteem and negative self-perception</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-developed cognitive and affective competences</li> <li>• Balanced temperament</li> <li>• Self-esteem and positive self-perception</li> <li>• Empathy and ability to exchange of perspectives with other people</li> <li>• Social competences</li> <li>• Flexibility, adaptability and change resources</li> </ul>
CONTEXTUAL FACTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient parenting competences, normless upbringing and socialisation, family conflicts</li> <li>• Problems with affiliation and safety towards significant person and caregivers</li> <li>• Abuse and neglect</li> <li>• Criminality, violence and abuse in family, close relations and community</li> <li>• Low economic, cultural and social capital in family and close community</li> <li>• Affiliation to criminal, anti-social and violence-legitimizing environments and radicalized communities</li> <li>• Insufficient schooling, education and work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive emotional relations to parents and other significant persons and caregivers</li> <li>• Support, empathy, care and attention through adolescence, in upbringing, socialisation and close relations</li> <li>• Internalized values, norms and ethical standards in terms of social behaviour</li> <li>• Affiliation to supportive, appreciative and empathic communities and groups</li> <li>• Positive experience from school and education</li> <li>• Positive economic, cultural and social capital</li> </ul>

### 3.6 - GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND TIPS FOR PREVENTION IN SCHOOL

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## EXAMPLE FOR INSPIRATION

Under the title "The @lliance" the Danish Police Intelligence Service (PET) collaborate with a large number of stakeholders in a multiagency partnership in order to develop initiatives for resources oriented prevention of youth

radicalisation and extremism through strengthening of young people's resilience. The partnership includes a diverse group of organisations, each of them contributing with special expertise to the joint efforts, i.e.

The Ministry of Children and Education, School Leaders Association, the National Centre for Prevention of Extremism, the Media Council for Children and Youth and many more focused on well-being for children and young people.

As one of the first results, the partnership has published the online magazin "The Wild Ways of the Web – about lies, manipulation and propaganda online".

The Magazin is aimed at schools and teachers with a wide range of articles and teaching questions for educational activities concerning social media and their role in radicalization processes etc.



# 4. CRITICAL THINKING IN SCHOOLS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS – BETWEEN SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

## 4.1 - INTRODUCTION

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*“In the democratic development of children and young people, critical thinking is an important building block that equips them to engage in a democratic dialogue and sharpens their ability to be critical, analytical and reflective of all forms of communication.”<sup>12</sup>*

Critical thinking has in recent years gained ground as a key word in the general debate on teaching democracy and democratic learning processes among students. Critical thinking is increasingly mentioned throughout Europe as a kind of mantra for the ability to be critical-analytical and reflective towards attitudes and expressions of views and opinions in both public forums, private contexts and social media. The common classroom constitutes just such a sphere for attitude exchange and attitude processing. As mentioned in the above quote, it is therefore an important learning goal that students are trained to be able to argue for their views as part of the democratic dialogue.

Against this background, critical thinking as a teaching discipline has a central place in the PRACTICE project and the Prevention Programme. The basic approach of the project is that critical thinking can help prevent violent radicalization from the point of view that the ability to critically analyze and validate political-ideological recruitment propaganda of a violent extremist nature will strengthen young people’s reservations, skepticism and direct distancing from such materials.

## 4.2 - WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

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There is today an extensive literature which, from various angles, defines critical thinking both in a pedagogical-didactic and a broader societal context. Critical thinking is not a new discipline, but has in recent years gained new ground in the pedagogical debate from different perspectives, including especially a societal-structural, a technological and a global perspective:

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted from the website “Democracy in development”, published by the Danish Ministry for Children and Education, 2020.

### THE SOCIETAL-STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVE:

- Society's socio-economic, socio-geographical and socio-cultural change processes
- Society and school characterized by increasing diversity and diversification in socio-cultural experience, values, identification models and perceptions of what is acceptable and what is controversial.

### THE TECHNOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE:

- Digital access to global mass media, information bombardment and highspeed communication

### THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:

- The post-factual age and conspiracy theory waves
- Violent radicalisation and extremism as a civilizational image of threat
- Sharpened focus on the concepts of democracy, citizenship and derived concepts such as democratic dialogue and critical thinking in both society and school

## 4.3 - CRITICAL THINKING AS EDUCATIONAL IDEAL

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*“Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas. Critical thinking has been the subject of much debate and thought since the time of early Greek philosophers such as Plato and Socrates and has continued to be a subject of discussion into the modern age, for example the ability to recognize fake news...”<sup>13</sup>*

As a pedagogical-didactic discipline, critical thinking had various centres of gravity in the course of time. The quote above refers to the **classical origin**, from which we to this day use the Socratic-philosophical argumentation theory, which is examined in more detail in the **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme. However, the problem-oriented teaching in **critical pedagogy** - which many teachers throughout Europe will be acquainted with - is also a tradition of critical thinking, which places particular emphasis on connecting thinking directly with action and concrete solutions to problems. In our day, critical thinking in many European countries is linked primarily to the teaching and upskilling of students' qualification for democratic dialogue and critical analysis.

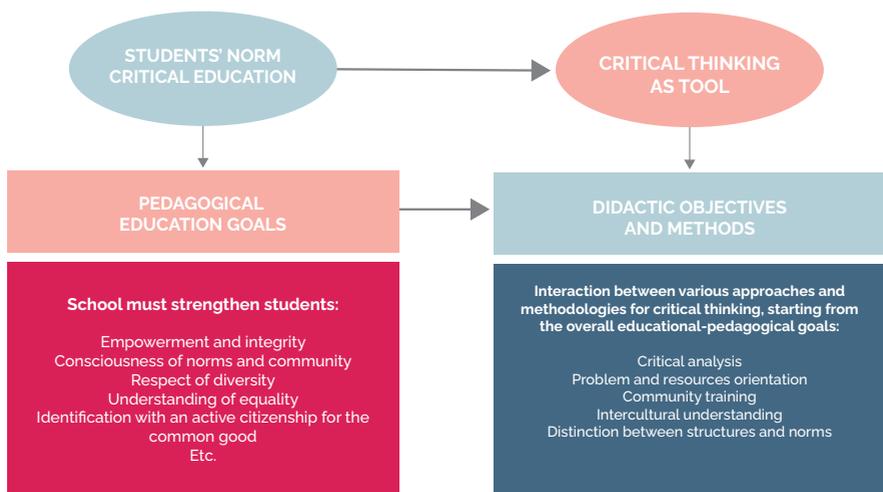
In recent years, critical thinking as a pedagogical-didactic discipline has increasingly been further developed to be a matter of **norm-critical thinking**. It is in the very concept that norm-critical thinking aims to be critical to societal norms and structures

<sup>13</sup> Quoted from the website: SkillsYouNeed.

that are fundamentally expressions of the majority’s attitudes and the majority’s right to define the normal and the deviant. In practice, these are often gender norms, sexual norms and views on ethnic-cultural minorities, which in school and teaching can seem oppressive and excluding to certain students - and teachers for that matter. Studies have shown, among other things, that negative preconceptions about ethnic minority boys in school do not infrequently cause the boys to drop out of school and behave in accordance with the negative norms they are met with:

*“That the statements are perceived as discriminatory seems justified in that they mention the category or place the children come from, with generalizing, subordinate, and derogatory characteristics; as people or places with bad character traits. Or they interpret the children’s behavior in a given situation in relation to an ethnic or more general and racialized category, which are dissociated from the same manner. This is how the boys experience not being seen as individuals children, but as representatives of a category of people of less value...”<sup>14</sup>*

In summary, the more recent norm-critical thinking has helped to put the very concept of **educational ideals** on the agenda and link critical thinking to what we have previously called the **school’s ethos**, i.e. the school’s core values of equality, tolerance, community and respect for diversity. From this perspective, critical thinking becomes a **didactic methodology** to promote the school’s real goal of providing students with a democratic and ethical education that strengthens both their critical sense, their sensibility and their ability to fill an active citizenship, as illustrated in the figure<sup>15</sup>:



<sup>14</sup> Citeret fra Gilliam, Laura (2017): “Minoritetsdanske drenge I skolen. Modvilje og diskrimination”. Title in English: “Mi-nority-Danish boys in school. Reluctance and discrimination”.

<sup>15</sup> Mhtconsult (2021): “PRACTICE WEBINAR: how will school be for everyone?”

## 4.4 - TEACHING IN THE CROSS FIELD BETWEEN SENSITIVE AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

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Several studies have pointed out that it takes professional practice to equip oneself to handle discussions in the classroom, when touching topics that are sensitive and perhaps even taboo to some or many students. This applies to both teachers and other professionals. Religious issues are often highlighted as a sensitive topic, since schools all over Europe are characterized by increasing ethnic-cultural and religious diversity. In some cases, a sensitive subject in teaching may give rise to controversial views bordering on hate speech, for example controversial statements of a discriminatory or even racist nature. Many teachers have presumably experienced that it can be difficult to steer discussions that move at the crossroads between sensitive topics and controversial views<sup>16</sup>. It reflects the importance of schools and teachers exchanging experiences on the handling of controversial topics in the classroom and helping each other to set guidelines for the individual teacher to rely on.

## 4.5 - GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND TIPS FOR CRITICAL THINKING IN SCHOOL

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### *TEACHING/LEARNING ACTIVITY: FROM WHERE DO I GET MY NEWS?*

This activity aims to make the students reflect critically on their own use of media, thus to strengthen their critical analysis by reflecting on news from various news angles:

- 1. As a prelude to the exercise, the teacher collects a number of headlines from newspapers, media and magazines that differ from each other in the use of words and tone. For example, select 10 different headings and copy them on one page for each student.*
- 2. The students are gathering in small groups of 3-4 members.*
- 3. All students individually tick the headings which they would give highest priority when reading, based on the method: the most important headline gets 5 points, the second most important gets 4 points, the third most important gets 3 points etc. This leaves some headlines with no points at all.*
- 4. In the groups, the students exchange their priorities and each student must argue and justify their priorities, thus to explain the motives behind the choices.*

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<sup>16</sup> Cf blandt andet Leeman, Yvonne og Wardekker, Willem (2013): "The Contested Professionalism of Teachers Meeting Radicalising Youth in Their Classrooms" and mhtconsult, op.cit. 2010.

5. *The students are gathering in plenary, and the teacher asks the groups to tell what characterizes the headings which were given the highest priorities: were they critical headings? Were those sensational headings? Did mysterious headings call for more reading etc.*

## COMMUNITY ACROSS DISAGREEMENTS<sup>17</sup>

This activity illustrates how teachers can strengthen the students' ability and self-confidence to dare external disagreement and say no to attitudes they do not approve. This is especially true of intolerant or outright discriminatory attitudes which the school officially distances itself from, such as prejudiced attitudes toward homosexuality.

The goal is through didactic training in DISAGREEMENT COMMUNITIES to experience that solid youth communities in school or otherwise can accommodate disagreement on many issues if the community at the same time is able to reflect critically on and also reject discriminatory views that violate the community's democratic and equal framework:

1. *The teacher and the students in the class jointly list a number of concepts and keywords on the board. These must be keywords that may give rise to discussion and disagreement.*
2. *The students are divided into two groups (or more depending on the number of students in the class).*
3. *Each group is instructed to have a particular attitude towards the first concept or keyword, for example LGBTQ persons. The attitudes of the groups must be opposite.*
4. *The groups are separated and work to find knowledge and point of views from media, articles etc about their keyword. Each group builds arguments for the position they are set to defend and put forward against the other groups' arguments.*
5. *The groups now meet for a "theatre contest", where they must try to refute the other groups' positions and persuade each other to change position.*
6. *After some time with "theatre contest", the students continue to discuss and critically reflect on the attitudes they had in play and their own reflections on the subject.*

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<sup>17</sup> Cf The Danish Ministry for Children and Education (2020): "Democratic education in primary schools and leisure ac-tivities. Inspiration to the prevention work".



# 5. DIGITAL AWARENESS IN SCHOOLS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - INTERACTION BETWEEN THE VIRTUAL AND ACTUAL WORLD

## 5.1 - INTRODUCTION

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*“Young people’s online lives are constantly evolving. New trends are emerging and social media and platforms are changing at a rate that may make it difficult for science to understand and describe the phenomena and processes before new phenomena arise. Young people’s online lives today are significantly different than just 10-15 years ago. First, they are more ‘on’ and a large part of their social life takes place online with daily routines where they systematically check certain platforms. Contacts and close friendships arise as a natural thing online, without the young people meeting each other in physical life...”<sup>18</sup>.*

Nowadays, it is a well-known fact that in just a few years, the Internet and social media have created a new kind of reality, a **virtual** reality. For many children and young people, it is a reality that in some cases is close to outcompeting the **factual** reality as if it were parallel universes. The virtual world gives young people access to a social interaction that for some young people may seem like a good - and perhaps better - alternative to the factual world. For some young people, it can even be a competition between appreciative and affirming virtual communities on the one hand - and lack of social contacts, marginalized positions and loneliness on the other hand in the factual daily life. It is such development processes that can lead vulnerable youth into the arms of extremist groups and individuals who operate covertly on particular parts of the Internet or work more openly with easily accessible videos with manipulative and conspiratorial content<sup>19</sup>.

Some extremism and terrorism researchers have argued that the Internet is increasingly being used as a forum for “training for jihad”<sup>20</sup>, where learning manuals and demonstration videos are shared via the Internet to an extent and in a language (English) that increases accessibility and hereby also the opportunities to touch on a pre-radicalized, receptive circle of recipients among children and young people.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Petersen, Kit Stender and Peters, Rikke Louise Alberg (2020): “Kortlægning af viden om forebyggelse af ekstremisme online blandt børn og unge”. English title: “Mapping knowledge about prevention of extremism online among children and youth”. For the Danish National Centre for Prevention of Extremism.

<sup>19</sup> Cf Petersen and Peters, op.cit. 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Cf Gemmerli, Tobias (2014): “Online-radikalisering. En rundrejse i forskningslitteraturen”. DIIS, Dansk Institut for Internationale Studier. English title: “Online-radicalisation. A travel in the scientific literature”. Danish Institute for In-ternational Studies.

Some extremist researchers thus point out that the personal and interactive contact that the Internet provides access to, can help to increase young people's commitment and sense of belonging in relation to extremist views, to which they are presented in a social and community-promoting manner. The concept of **networked radicalisation** indicates that it is a process of radicalisation in several stages, which moves from a first attention to a sharpened interest, on to acceptance and action<sup>21</sup>.

It is such digital radicalization processes that the **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme aims to counteract through pedagogical-didactic materials for schools and teachers. The Prevention Programme thus provides schools and teachers with a thorough introduction to the concepts and operative forms of digital radicalisation. The Programme also outlines the digital competences that can help teachers, students and parents to be critical of the digital flow of information, which in some cases acts as a radicalisation and recruitment tool for extremist circles. In addition, there is a range of teaching/learning activities to support students' critical analysis of digital phenomena with a violent-extremist message and content.

## 5.2 - RADICALISATION ONLINE – WHAT IS IT, AND HOW CAN SCHOOLS PREVENT?

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Children and young people today are at risk of ending up in contact with extremist ideologies and expressions when they play games or work online with school assignments etc. Students may inadvertently be confronted with hate speech towards certain groups in society or practical jokes with a vicious point, when they are using an otherwise innocent gaming platform. In addition, some students will themselves reach out on social media and become acquainted with platforms such as 4Chan, closed Discord channels, hate groups on Facebook etc. Students will in some cases be familiar with phenomena such as echo chambers, trolling, grooming, misinformation and fake news. Some students may have an ongoing connection to an echo chamber, where they encounter attitudes with which they can identify, for example discriminatory perceptions about certain population segments etc<sup>22</sup>.

Recent research suggests that children and young people in vulnerable positions are at particular risk of being attracted to online-based extremist material. It has even been mentioned that children and young people who themselves were exposed to hate speeches online, are prone to commit similar abuses against others online<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Cf Helfstein, Scott (2012): "Edges of Radicalization: Individuals, Networks and Ideas in Violent Extremism". Westpoint: Combating Terrorism Center.

<sup>22</sup> Cf The Danish National Centre for Prevention of Extremism (2020): "Nye fænomener inden for ekstremisme online". English title: "New phenomena within extremism online".

<sup>23</sup> Cf Waschs S, Wright MF, Vazsonyi AT (2019): "Understanding the overlap between cyberbullying and cyberhate perpetration. Moderating effects of toxic online disinhibition". <https://doi.org/10.1002/cbm.2116>.

This has led researchers to suggest that schools must systematically contribute to strengthening students' media competences through offline teaching<sup>24</sup>. The recommendation is to introduce students more thoroughly to the functioning of social media and combine this training with self-confidence exercises as well as teaching critical thinking and democratic skills and disagreement communities etc., as also mentioned above in the review of critical thinking as a prevention strategy. It is important that the school and teachers are very aware that social media today is an active forum for children and young people's socialization and overall education processes. The more the school can take the lead in in the students' overall education processes based on a strong school ethos, the stronger and more efficient the school can support the students' critical sense and strengthen the students' resilience.

Furthermore, some experts have stated that the Internet and social media are rarely the only tool used in the radicalisation process. However, there is no doubt that the Internet plays a vital role in recruiting to extremist groups and, moreover, is increasingly using technical professionalism to spread extremist propaganda and ideological messages<sup>25</sup>. This has been shown in connection with major terrorist cases, where for example "lonely wolves" such as the Norwegian terrorist Breivik, before their attacks were active for several years in online forums and systematically used the Internet to spread extremist messages and manifestos.

### 5.3 - GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND TIPS FOR DIGITAL AWARENESS IN SCHOOL

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In a British investigation of two main strategies on how to safeguard youngsters' online activities, the author points to the strategy of Internet filtering on one hand – and digital literacy education on the other hand. Filtering on the Internet is seen as a classic methodology to prevent online radicalisation, where youngsters are cut off from activities on certain parts of social media, chat forums and video sites etc. Then the author reflects on the digital literacy strategy and stresses how youngsters are meant to be protected through a learning process that strengthens their competences to access online information and material from a critical perspective<sup>26</sup>.

Teachers can take advantage of this approach by initiating dialogues similar to the mentioned U.K. school research, where students are encouraged to discuss and reflect on their own knowledge, use and perception of various online media and forums.

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<sup>24</sup> Jf The Danish National Centre for Prevention of Extremism (2020): "Fire niveauer inden for ekstremisme online". English title: "Four levels of extremism online".

<sup>25</sup> Cf The City of Copenhagen (2016): "Less radicalisation through an effective and coherent effort".

<sup>26</sup> Cf McNicol, Sarah (2016): "Responding to Concerns about Online Radicalization in U.K. Schools through a Radicalization Critical Digital Literacy Approach".

Key words for the dialogue may for example be<sup>27</sup>:

- *What do you know about search services and social media data collection. How do they get their knowledge?*
- *What social media do you use on a daily basis - and why did you choose these media?*
- *Do you know other search services than google, for instance Qwant.com, findx.com, duckduckgo.com, startpage.com? Try to search on a certain issues on the various services – do you see any differences in the information, you gain?*
- *What do you know about phenomena as echochambers, encrypted services, the dark Internet, fake news, trolls. How do you perceive such phenomena, and what would be a critical approach?*
- *What does it mean for a democracy that we cannot always trust information, we get online?*

**IN THE PRACTICE PREVENTION PROGRAMME**  
YOU CAN FIND MUCH MORE INFORMATION AND IDEAS  
TO LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM



<sup>27</sup> Cf The Danish Intelligence Service, the Media Council for Children and Youth and the Danish National Centre for Pre-vention of Extremism: (2018): “Nettets Vildveje. Om løgn, manipulation og propaganda online”, English title: “Wild roads of the Internet. About lies, manipulation and propaganda online”.

# 6. INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN SCHOOLS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS – TO PROMOTE THE IDENTITY OF CITIZENSHIP

## 6.1 - INTRODUCTION

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*“A basic assumption in intercultural pedagogy is that all pedagogical activity should be based on an expectation that all children come with important resources, knowledge and an ability to learn, which it is the task of the education system to build on and qualify. In this basis, there is a showdown with the perception of certain children as particularly deficient or problematic ..”<sup>28</sup>.*

In this quote, the author makes himself a spokesperson for the view that in the **school context**, intercultural pedagogy is basically about meeting the individual student without negative preconceptions or normative expectations of the student’s resources and learning potentials - regardless of the student’s socio-economic and sociocultural background. Thus, the author is in line with the general approach in the **PRACTICE** project and the Prevention Programme, where phenomena such as critical thinking, intercultural competence and ability to handle conflicts are the cornerstones of a **preventive school pedagogy** that aims to strengthen students’ resilience and ability to understand themselves as equal citizens.

Like the **PRACTICE** Project, the author also emphasizes that the school and teachers must be able to look with critical eyes at their **own preconceptions**, as was described in the previous chapter on the norm-critical approach. But in addition, an intercultural pedagogy implies that teachers have a **conceptual understanding** of the cultural concept in which an intercultural pedagogy is reflected. Without a critical understanding of the cultural concept itself and the normative notions associated with it, it can be difficult to practice a pedagogy, which effectively puts all students on an equal footing in education, regardless of their socio-economic, socio-cultural and ethnic-cultural background.

Intercultural awareness - and raising of intercultural consciousness among students in teaching - can thus be seen as a kind of **umbrella concept** for a number of other phenomena that play an important role in both the general and specific prevention efforts. This applies to concepts and phenomena such as anti-discrimination and human rights as well as diversity, equal citizenship and global understanding, which

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted from Gitz-Johansen, Thomas (2006): “Kompensatorisk eller interkulturel pædagogik - skal vi reparere børnenes “fejl” eller kvalificere deres forskelle?”. I antologien: Interkulturel pædagogik, red. Horst, Christian. English title: “Compensatory or intercultural pedagogy - should we repair the children’s “mistakes” or qualify their differences?”

are included in the **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme.

The following sections provide, firstly, a brief introduction to the concept of culture and the meaning of intercultural competence. Then follows a brief account of how intercultural and norm-critical awareness of students in the teaching/learning environments can contribute to strengthening students' understanding of how cultural identity is a dynamic and changeable concept, and how respect for diversity is a fundamental prerequisite for equal relationships in the classroom as well as in the surrounding society.

## 6.2 - CULTURAL IDENTITIES

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*“Sometimes one would think that it is exclusively women who have a gender, older people who have an age, and black-haired people who have an ethnic background. We are all a gender, an age, a social background, an ethnic background, etc., and no one wants to be reduced to just being a representative of a group, because then the individual differences disappear and you are put out of booths. from a single dimension of his identity...”<sup>29</sup>.*

In the quote, the author describes how we both as children, youth and adults –both as students and teachers - juggle with many different **cultural identities**, depending on the context we are in. This means in practice that intercultural competence - similar to culture – is a broad concept that far from can be limited to being a matter of ethnicity or national origin. The concept of culture covers a much wider range of differences such as differences in living conditions, needs and affiliations in relation to variables such as age, gender, socioeconomic class, sociocultural lifestyles and ethnicity, education, occupation and employment, sexual orientation, health, physical and mental resources, religion, belief and religiosity, political beliefs, etc. There are, in short, cultural differences and similarities between us in almost every area of life. It further indicates that the concepts of interculturality, intercultural competence and intercultural communication have a greater scope than one that only connects the concepts to the ethnic-cultural dimension<sup>30</sup>.

It also implies that prejudices and discriminatory behaviors can address differences other than ethnic-cultural differences. Seen in this light, the school and teachers have an intercultural obligation to be aware of their own normative preconceptions and behavior towards different types of students, as mentioned earlier in the section on the school's ethos and the norm-critical approaches.

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted from Plum, Elisabeth (2004): "Mangfoldighedsledelse – dynamikken mellem ligestilling og ressourcer". Eng-lish title: "Diversity Management – the dynamic between equality and resources". In the Anthology: Heading for Diver-sity? Ed. Thomsen, Margit Helle.

<sup>30</sup> Cf Allemann-Ghionda, Christina (2008): "Intercultural education in schools. A comparative study". Requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education.

At the same time, teachers must, through the teaching, train the students in an intercultural understanding and communication that distances themselves from exclusionary and even discriminatory attitudes and behavioral patterns towards other students who belong to a minority in comparison with the majority of students in the school and class:

## EXAMPLE:

*“Violence in schools and other educational settings is a worldwide problem. Students who are perceived not to conform to prevailing sexual and gender norms, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), are more vulnerable. Violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, also referred to as homophobic and transphobic violence, is a form of school-related gender-based violence. It includes physical, sexual and psychological violence and bullying and, like other forms of school-related violence, can occur in classes, playgrounds, toilets and changing rooms, on the way to and from school and online....”<sup>31</sup>.*

In the report “Out in the Open”, Unesco has made visible how many children and young people are exposed to violent abuse and bullying at school and in their free time as a result of their sexual orientation. The sexual and gender-based violence in schools is a serious and in many cases invisible expression of how discrimination and exclusion take place on several fronts. It is a violence that at the same time reflects the need for schools and teachers to raise awareness of various forms of discrimination and give high priority to teaching the concept of and acceptance of diverse cultural identities.

In a similar Danish study among LGBTQ + students, the students were asked how they could become more confident in school. Almost 80 pct of the students answered that lectures and presentations from young people about different sexual orientations and gender identities will make their school more open and safe, while 72 pct answered that if you talked more openly about different gender identities/sexual orientations in school, it will be more open and safe<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Quoted from Unesco (2016): “Out in the Open. Education Sector Responses to Violence based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression”.

<sup>32</sup> Cf LGBT Danmark (2021): “Stop diskrimination i skolen. LGBTQ+ elever trivsel og vilkår i grundskolen”. Title in English: “Stop discrimination in school. LGBTQ+ students wellbeing and conditions in school”.

In summary, intercultural understanding and communication skills relate to our ability to move across different environments, which may be characterized by differences in values, norms and practices in relation to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, age, illness etc. Thus, the concept of cultural identities is also based on an **intercultural resource perspective** that encourages both teachers and students to be aware of students' individual resources - and avoid any prior generalisation, culturalisation and negative preconceptions.

### 6.3 - CULTURE IS A DYNAMIC PHENOMENON – INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN SCHOOL IS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS

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Some teachers may think that it is unmanageable to gain insight into so many different cultures in order to become familiar with students' individual backgrounds - especially students from other countries. Traditionally, intercultural competence and communication was associated with so-called "cultural checklists" on the grounds that both teachers and other professionals would achieve an impression of traditions, values, codes of conduct among students and other target groups with a particular ethnic-national background from nationality-based checklists. The critique of this approach nowadays is that it is based on a static cultural conception and a culturalisation that does not take into account the process of mutual adaptation which takes place over time in all multicultural societies.

Both in school and in other social institutions, culturalisation can manifest itself in the fact that both students and teachers have a stereotype and generalizing view of certain groups of minority students, even if students with the same physical disability, the same ethnic origin or the same sexual orientation have nothing else in common and are, in fact, just as different individuals as all other students. Thus, the static - so-called functionalist - cultural perception is based on a notion that culture is a collective, unchanging, irreversible and inherited "coding", which is not affected or changed when people settle elsewhere and change their life framework and context<sup>33</sup>.

Many cultural researchers long ago distanced themselves from the static understanding of culture. Instead, they analyze culture as a more complex and dynamic phenomenon. According to the dynamic approach, culture is first and foremost an expression of relationships and interactions, which constantly arise and are processed in a dynamic interaction between people in different contexts and communities of values.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf Thomsen, Margit Helle (2013): "The influence of cultural perceptions of the body in intercultural communication". In the anthology: *Body in Culture – Culture in Body. About the interface between culture, body and communication.*

This also applies in the school's universe, where both students and teachers appear with different traditions, experiences and values, which on the one hand must be recognized and respected - but on the other hand must also be adapted to the school's values and ethos – thus the intercultural diversity of the school unites students and teachers on the basis of a common value of equality and the exchange of experiences and beliefs in a democratic, non-violent dialogue.

## 6.4 - THE INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF DIVERSITY AND CITIZENSHIP IN SCHOOL

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From this frame of understanding, interculturality goes hand in hand with the diversity of the school and also with the concept of equal citizenship. Without the experience of being equal and recognized as individuals in the school's teaching/learning environment, many students will certainly have difficulties identifying with the stated values of community, anti-discrimination and respect for diversity which many schools in Europe share. Equal citizenship, especially for some students with ethnic minority backgrounds, may seem like an external and "artificial" value, all the while that some of these students are unlikely to have obtained *formal* citizenship, even though they may have been born and raised in the country.

Citizenship is basically about knowing one's rights and duties - and using one's rights in a society where one feels recognized as well as committed and obliged to contribute to the common good. History has shown us, however, that the ideals of rights and duties must sometimes be emphasized, even in modern democracies. Today, the issue of democratic education, active citizenship, participation, belonging and mutual responsibility is the subject of strong and passionate debates throughout Europe - not least sharpened in the wake of recent years' refugee situation and refugee policy<sup>34</sup>.

The school plays a key role in the socialisation of students to an active and dedicated citizenship in both youth and adulthood. One of the hotspots in preventive and democracy-preserving education can be the question of deviations in *formal citizenship and non-formal citizenship* among students in the same class. Differences in citizen positions may, in fact, call for a clarification, as it may have a decisive influence on students' self-perception and experience of having equal status in school and in society - or, conversely, their experience of exclusion and lack of belonging. Teachers can help all students in this clarification and learning process by making citizenship a *teaching theme*, for example based on teaching activities such as those described in the following good practice examples. In the **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme you will find instructions for a number of similar activities.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf Thomsen, Margit Helle (2019): "Citizenship in peer learning and integration".

## 6.5 - GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND TIPS FOR INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS AND CITIZENSHIP IN SCHOOL

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### CLARIFYING CITIZENSHIP IN CLASS

#### A GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

The teacher presents different aspects of citizenship and explains the formal distinctions. The teacher describes how the informal, but active citizenship is an important prerequisite for maintaining cohesion and mutual responsibility and reliability in society - despite differences in formal citizenship.

The students then groupwise reflect on the definitions and their implications for their own everyday life, their self-perception and experience of belonging. Students prepare posters of their conclusions and results for discussion in class:

**THE FORMAL CITIZENSHIP** refers to a legal aspect linked to a formal nationality and legal status, entailing different societal and political rights and obligations in relation to the state and society. Consequently, the formal legal citizenship is a status to be assigned or born into.

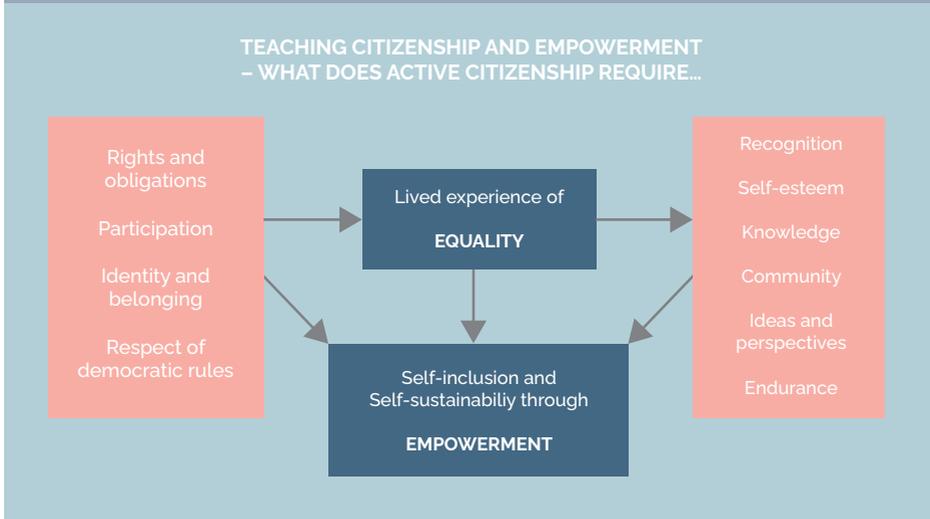
**THE CIVIC CITIZENSHIP** refers to an identity aspect and is linked to an attitudinal and relational status, entailing the experience of coherence, cohesion, action and solidarity with other people in communities and political contexts etc. Consequently, the informal civic citizenship is a status to be experienced and demonstrated through practice.

**THE EU CITIZENSHIP** in addition, refers to a formal legal right closely related to the formal national citizenship. The EU citizenship was introduced with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 and proclaims that any formal citizen from an EU member state has an EU citizenship as a supplement to their national citizenship. The European Union Citizenship provides a range of rights, including the right to settle down and work in all EU countries.

## CIVIC AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP REQUIRES EMPOWERMENT

### A GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

In continuation of the students' discussion of the aspects of citizenship, they can work on a further didactic exercise, where they from the figure below analyze, what prerequisites must be present to feel and act on the idea of civic and active citizenship. The figure suggests some prerequisites, and students are encouraged to add more requirements<sup>35</sup>:



### CULTURAL IDENTITIES

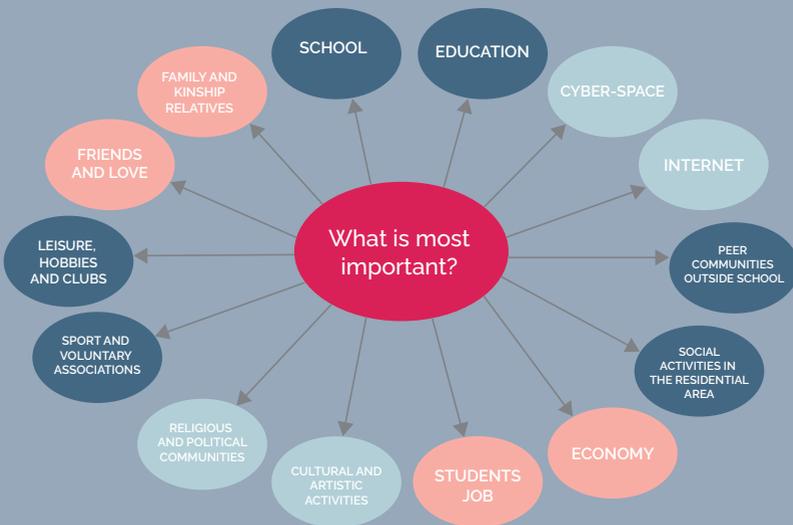
The concept of multiple cultural identities is a good starting point for letting the students reflect on situations and contexts, which in daily life are most important to them. The students may work individually or group-wise on this issue. Their task is to deepen the experiences and emotions of identity and identification to that underlie their priorities. In addition to the examples in the figure below, the PRACTICE Prevention Programme includes many teaching/learning activities, focused on the need and requirements for intercultural understanding and communication in terms of issues such as gender, migration, discrimination etc.

<sup>35</sup> From mhtconsult (2017): "Community Counteracting Radicalisation. The CoCoRa Prevention Strategy Handbook Col-lection".

# AN EXAMPLE OF A GOOD PRACTICE

A group of young Muslims were in a educational process asked to identify the domains, from which they especially derived their sense of identity and belonging. Before the process, the teacher had a strong expectation that the young students would point unequivocally to religious communities. However, in practice, the young people’s choices went in other directions, where especially family and education had a central position. The exercise supported the young people to analyze, where each of them at the end of the day felt the strongest relations and sense of belonging<sup>36</sup>.

TO EXPLORE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, TRAJECTORIES AND LIFE ARENAS



<sup>36</sup> Mhtconsult, op.cit. 2017.

# 7. GLOBAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT - WHEN THE WORLD CASTS SHADOWS INTO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

## 7.1 - INTRODUCTION

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*“Education provides us with an indepth understanding that we are connected as citizens in the global society, and our challenges are interconnected...”<sup>37</sup>.*

In the quote, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon draws a close line between the understanding of global citizenship and education. Thus, he placed a fundamental role in the school and among teachers at all grade levels in terms of the socialisation of children and young people to a global perspective and experience of **connectedness** with the **global context**. The concept of global citizenship must precisely emphasize that our status and function as citizens extends beyond the local and national level. Global citizenship must express that we, as adults, children and youth, have a **shared responsibility** to contribute to the global community, for example in relation to the environment and climate.

Therefore, it is important that both teachers and students understand that the global perspective and conflicts in other parts of the world can have an impact on the activities in the local classroom. This may be the case, even though teachers and most of the students do not at all experience being involved in conflicts and war zones far from the daily life in a safe community. Consequently, in the school’s general prevention work, teachers must be equipped to allow for and manage situations in the classroom where students take sides against each other because of conflicts in other parts of the world.

Against this background, the international perspective is included as a theme in the **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme, as a reflection of the fact that global conflicts formed the basis for a massive recruitment of young people to war zones outside Europe – and furthermore, as a reflection of the fact that many students in Europe have familial, relational and value-related ties to populations in conflict zones around the world.

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<sup>37</sup> UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, quoted from UNESCO (2015): “Education in global citizenship. Topics and learning objectives”.

## 7.2 - GLOBAL CONFLICTS IN SCHOOL - WHY?

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As mentioned in a previous chapter, controversial topics can be described as matters that evoke strong emotions and tensions in the classroom as well as in other educational and societal contexts<sup>38</sup>. Some topics are almost predefined as controversial due to their particular background and circumstances:

### EXAMPLE 1

The protracted, complicated and unresolved conflicts and wars in the Middle East is a wellknown example. Thus, in the individual class, there may be students who are full of worry and anxiety about close family members in Middle Eastern war zones. At the same time, the majority of the students in the class are without personal ties to the conflicts, but may still have strong and categorical anti-conflict attitudes, for example, Israel versus Palestine.

In other cases, completely unexpected and unpredictable discussions and tensions may arise among the students:

### EXAMPLE 2

In a class, the students are currently dealing with international conventions and EU equal treatment directives. All of a sudden, loud criticism and protests occurs from a small group of students. The criticism is directed in particular at the UN Refugee Convention, which the group of students criticizes for being outdated and for imposing an unreasonable burden on European countries in light of the influx of refugees. The group pretends to be spokespersons for withdrawing from the convention and also points to the constricting ties that some of the other conventions and EU directives impose on the national level. Soon a heated and almost hateful discussion takes place among the students. The teacher is left unprepared and surprised because this violent emotional conflict among the students was completely unexpected.

Both examples illustrate how teachers often need to be prepared and able to handle sensitive themes and conflicting materials without notice. In the *first example*, it is important that the teacher has an eye in advance on the fact that some students may be familiarly and personally affected by the Middle East conflict, even if the students themselves were not born and raised in the conflict area. In the *second example*, the teacher must hastily bring structure to the students' discussion and, for example, make the students establish a list of critical arguments against the conventions, thus to maintain the learning perspective in the situation.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf Council of Europe (2015): "Teaching Controversial Issues. Professional development pack for teachers".

In summary, the teacher must be able to act as the **neutral mediator and facilitator**, letting the students speak and argue in peace in order with their attitudes and arguments. In this role, the teacher must set the **framework and common rules** for how students treat each other respectfully despite disagreements. At the same time, the teacher must be very conscious of not expressing his/her/their own attitudes and feelings, regardless of whether some students express controversial and provocative views. This role of mediator and facilitator is not easy. But it is nonetheless necessary because it is also a way to steer students in the direction of greater critical sense as well as acceptance that one must be prepared to face views that are fundamentally at odds with one's own views – which must not at any point escalate to mutual threats, let alone violent confrontations in the class.

It is important to remember that what appears to be controversial issues varies in time and space - and from society to society. At short notice, almost all social and ethical issues can develop from being almost unnoticed to becoming a focal point in the global debate, for example climate and resources, gender roles, religious symbols etc.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that in some cases governments and politicians take an official position in the face of global conflicts by standing clearly on one side in a war situation. Traditionally, the official positioning has had a great influence on the general opinion and expressions of sympathy in society. It can also affect the general positioning of schools in global conflicts, and it can in turn result in some students feeling excluded and confirmed in an alienation that they have already experienced in everyday life. The influx of young Syrian fighters from Europe - some of whom were still school children - can be seen as an example of the experience of being marginalized in both school and society leading young people in the arms of dogmatic youth groups of both Islamist and right-wing extremist observance - and at worst fall on to terrorist movements<sup>39</sup>.

Again, we are back to the school's preventive role, where the school is basically tasked with teaching students to relate locally, nationally and globally to controversies, conflicts and pluralistic positions as part of students' qualification into democratic citizens.

### 7.3 - TEACHING THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE - HOW?

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In summary, teachers should not shy away from addressing controversial and conflicting topics in teaching. Teachers have a great - and also challenging - responsibility for the pedagogical-didactic organisation of topics that may be sensitive and controversial for a minority or majority in the class.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf The Danish National Centre for Prevention of Extremism (2020): "Contextualising Salafism and Salafi Jihadism". Anthology, ed. Magnus Ranstorp.

The following points of attention can be useful when teachers in practice need to ensure that potentially sensitive or controversial topics are not portrayed unilaterally, negatively toned or as enemy images:

- *When you as a teacher introduce international points of conflict - for example in the Middle East - be aware in both your planning and implementation of the teaching that some students in the class may have grown up with family trauma and a personal connection that gives them a different comprehension and perception of the causes of the conflicts and aggressions than the official and common opinion in society. Make sure that students are genuinely confident in putting forward views that may provoke or even repel the majority in the classroom. Ask open and curious questions whether there may be other explanations and experiences than the general opinion and consensus in society.*
- *Make it clear to students from the beginning that what is controversial and sensitive for one student is not necessarily controversial and sensitive for a majority of students. Use controversial topics to train students in the understanding that the controversial and sensitive is not universally valid, but rather related to people's biographical history, personal experiences and emotions and - not least - their position in the class and in society as either a majority or a minority in terms of socio-economic affiliation, ethnicity, religious orientation, gender and sexuality as well as other complex aspects.*
- *Be strongly aware of your own position, your reactions, your body language etc. It is important that you do not in any way radiate a distance or direct distancing from certain views in the students' debate on controversial topics. You must maintain your role as mediator and facilitator of students' discussion.*
- *At the same time, be aware of your own norms, beliefs and values, how they arose and what influence they may have had on your teaching. Remember the norm-critical perspective discussed in a previous chapter.*
- *Consider how you can possibly experiment with different teaching roles, depending on the composition of the students in the specific class. In addition to the neutral mediator and facilitator role, you may try out the role of "the devil's advocate" in students' discussions or perhaps even more direct statements about your own point of view. Get inspiration in existing materials<sup>40</sup>, where you may find ideas on how to establish basic rules for discussions together with the students - as well as methods for decentralisation, where you discuss controversial topics in a distant way – as described in more detail in the PRACTICE Prevention Programme.*

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<sup>40</sup> For instance The Council of Europe (2015): [http://www.worldwiseschools.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Teaching-Controversial-Issues-Professional-Development-Pack-for-Teachers-C Council-of-Europe.pdf](http://www.worldwiseschools.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Teaching-Controversial-Issues-Professional-Development-Pack-for-Teachers-Council-of-Europe.pdf).

## 7.4 - GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND TIPS FOR TEACHING IN GLOBAL ISSUES AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

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### GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

#### AN EXAMPLE OF INSPIRATION

In a publication on teaching in global citizenship, Unesco has emphasized three learning dimension in order to describe students' learning needs in terms of the global citizenship<sup>41</sup>:

<i>THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION</i>	Knowledge and ability to understand the world and its complexity
<i>THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DIMENSION</i>	Values, attitudes and psycho-social competences to live together with others in respect and peace
<i>THE BEHAVIOURAL DIMENSION</i>	Attitudes in relation to performing in practice, achieving results and show engagement and commitment

Within these three learning dimensions, Unesco developed a total educational system consisting of teaching topics, learning objectives, learning outcome and educational materials adapted to various age groups:

- *Pre/lower primary = 5-9 years*
- *Upper primary = 9-12 years*
- *Lower secondary = 12-15 years*
- *Upper secondary = 15-18 years*

With a starting point in the age groups, the educational system aims to provide students with the following competences within each of the learning dimensions:

<i>THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge and understanding of local, national and global issues and the interconnectedness and interdependency of different countries and populations.</li><li>• Skills for critical thinking and analysis.</li></ul>
<i>THE SOCIOEMOTIONAL DIMENSION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, based on human rights.</li><li>• Attitudes of empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity.</li></ul>
<i>THE BEHAVIOURAL DIMENSION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acting effectively and responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world.</li><li>• Motivation and willingness to take necessary actions.</li></ul>

## *GLOBAL CITIZENS IN A GLOBAL WORLD* <sup>42</sup>

### **AN EXAMPLE OF INSPIRATION**

Under the overall title “GLOBAL CITIZENS IN A GLOBAL WORLD”, UNESCO in Denmark in collaboration with a large school network, has published a comprehensive teaching/learning material that is divided in relation to students at many grade levels from preschool to middle school, high school. The goal is to strengthen students’ understanding of how they not only belong to local communities, but also are fellow citizens with a responsibility to other fellow citizens at the global level. The material states that education for global citizenship must be transformative. It involves students acquiring knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that enable them to contribute to a more inclusive, just and peaceful world.

<sup>42</sup> Read more: [unesco-asp.dk](https://unesco-asp.dk), including an introduction in English.

The material contains both teaching courses and teaching materials within the focus areas of global citizenship and sustainable development. Within the focus areas, there are academic subject areas on the world goals, intercultural competence, human rights, etc.

Learn more on: [unesco-asp.dk](http://unesco-asp.dk) (Unesco Associated Schools Project). Here you'll also find an English introduction.





## 8. SUMMARY

The Teacher's Handbook is part of a series of publications published as open resources in the project **PRACTICE** – Preventing Radicalism through Critical Thinking Competences". Based on the comprehensive contents of the PRACTICE Prevention Programme, the Teacher's Handbook serves to facilitate and contextualize the use of the programme's teaching-learning methods and activities within the school's general preventive framework. For this purpose, the Teacher's Handbook is structured on the basis of *three focal points*:

**FIRSTLY**, the Teacher's Handbook includes a thorough introduction to the structure of the Prevention Programme and the methodological coherence between the main parts and thematic modules in the programme. Thus, the Handbook illustrates how teachers may transfer overall methodological approaches to general prevention of radicalization with concrete teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

**SECONDLY**, the Teacher's Handbook deals with the basic and controversial question of whether the school is, in fact, a forum for the prevention of violent and illegal radicalisation and extremism. One main conclusion is that the understanding and definition of radicalisation – and consequently prevention of radicalization among students and young people - moves on a delicate balance. *On the one hand*, a definition and preventive approach must ensure that schools as well as media and political decision-makers maintain a sober, tolerant and non-exclusive approach to young people's radical views and expressions. However, *on the other hand*, it is necessary to provide a professional attention to worrying behaviour, which includes the professional responsibility to respond if a student gradually or suddenly shows signs of readiness for violence, hate speech and prejudiced harassment against other students, use of external and totalitarian symbols of extremist observance, increased isolation from family and previous friends in school or elsewhere etc.

In order to meet both of these aspects of the school's preventive responsibility, the further conclusion in the handbook is that the school and teachers must first and foremost carry out - and continually improve - the *basic mission and ethos* of supporting and promoting children and young people's well-being, recognition and personal, social, relational and professional development, thus they learn to think critically based on democratic values and be part of positive communities for the common good of society. This also applies to the school's and teachers' insight into possible risk factors as well as into the resilience factors that the school must systematically support, especially among vulnerable students.

In this context, it is very important to be aware that *critical thinking is not a universal and unambiguous concept*. From their own perspective, young people in extremist environments use critical thinking towards the societies they distance themselves

from. It is not the inability to think critically - but rather other values critical thinking that makes them extremists and ultimately perhaps terrorists. Therefore, the school's educational training in critical thinking must constantly emphasize and clarify the values that critical thinking must convey about humanity, equality and equal rights, tolerance towards diversity etc.

At the same time, it is important that the school and the teachers have the appropriate knowledge and methods to intervene effectively in an inclusive way if there is a suspicion that a student is in the process of joining an extremist environment. In such cases, the school is forced to ally with other authorities in a ***cross-sectoral collaboration***. Deradicalisation is not a task that the school can handle alone, let alone be responsible for. Thus, the local/regional establishment of cross-sectoral, collaborative partnerships plays a key role in preventive efforts.

**THIRDLY**, the Teacher's Handbook puts the key concepts and methodological approaches in The **PRACTICE** Prevention Programme into perspective in relation to the school's everyday life, thus providing good practice examples and tips for the educational practice. The handbook thus reflects on different educational approaches and methods to critical thinking and concludes that ***critical thinking*** in school should be seen as a means of strengthening students' empowerment, critical awareness of excluding norms, students' ability to form equal communities and their identification with active citizenship for the common good.

Furthermore, the Handbook focuses on the handling of ***controversial topics*** in the classroom, especially represented by situations, where ***global conflicts*** cast shadows into the daily educational environments in school. The conclusion is that the global perspective cannot be concealed in the classroom, where especially students with personal relationships in conflict zones can be very affected by how the conflicts are discussed in the classroom. The handbook provides good practice advice on how the teacher can handle the role of neutral mediator and facilitator, thus to ensure that no students feel rejected or excluded from the class' community of opinion.

Another key issue is the educational challenges that follow in the wake of a ***digital*** development where many students find themselves in an overall learning process that constantly alternates between their engagement in both a ***virtual and actual reality***. The conclusion is that the more the school can take the lead in the students' overall educational processes based on a strong school ethos, the stronger and more efficient the school can support the students' critical sense and strengthen their resilience against the increasingly refined radicalisation online through exchange of digital experiences etc.

Finally, the handbook illustrates how the umbrella concept of *intercultural awareness* plays an important role in all prevention efforts, by referring to a series of coherent phenomena ranking from human rights and equal opportunities to anti-discrimination in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, disability etc. One central conclusion is that students should be given an understanding of the *concept of multiple cultural identities*, thus to realize that no person is only one identity. On the contrary, all individuals identify with different identities depending on the context - regardless of their gender, age and ethnicity. Another important conclusion is that school and teachers must strengthen students' understanding of a *dynamic concept of culture*, meaning that culture is continuously changing and is constantly shaped by the context in which people, regardless of their background and origin, find themselves.

Therefore, it does not make sense to take a static approach that focuses on "their culture - our culture". Instead, it makes sense in all prevention efforts to emphasize students' *democratic community as equal citizens*.





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