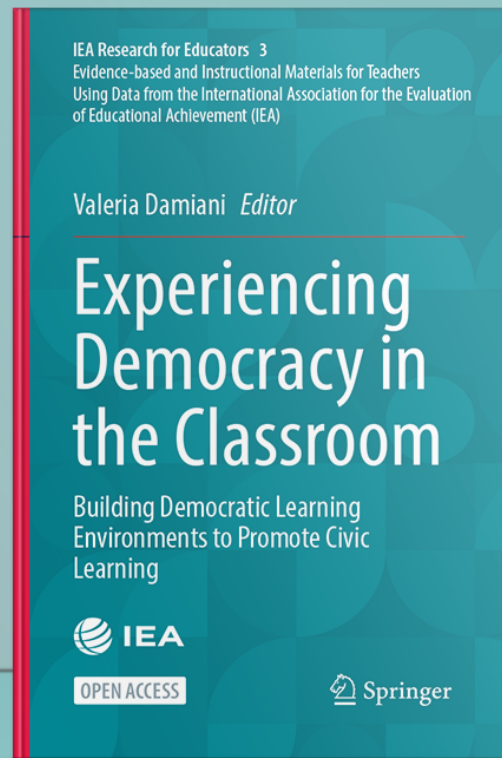




Chapter 5

Highlighted

**Experiencing Civic and Citizenship
Education at School:**

*Good Practice Examples From
Four ICCS Countries*

Chapter 5

Experiencing Civic and Citizenship Education at School: Good Practice Examples From Four ICCS Countries

Remmert Daas, Maribel Alves Fierro Sevilla, Eva Klemenčič Mirazchiyski, Tatiana Arrigoni, and Tiziana Morgante

Abstract

This chapter examines five good practice examples conducted in four International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) participating countries—Brazil, Italy, Slovenia, and the Netherlands. Each example outlines the national and school-level contexts of civic and citizenship education (CCE), illustrating approaches for its implementation. Despite differing institutional settings, all examples share a commitment to democratic learning environments through active and experiential learning methodologies that foster democratic engagement and critical reflection. The examples include a project on Brazilian Black Awareness Day, a debate tournament in collaboration with the Trentino Historical Museum Foundation in Trento, Italy, a student-led flash mob against gender violence in Rome, Italy, a social stratification role play in the Netherlands, and an online source-based debate on elections in Slovenia. Collectively, the activities demonstrate the diversity, adaptability, and transformative potential of CCE in linking classroom learning to broader civic action and community engagement.

Keywords

classroom learning, democratic learning environments, project-based CCE learning, school-level CCE contexts;

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents five examples of civic and citizenship education (CCE) activities across four countries that took part in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)—Brazil, Italy, Slovenia, and the Netherlands.

Each example includes a short description of the country's national context for teaching CCE, indicating whether it is taught as a separate subject, integrated into other subjects, and/or approached as a cross-curricula theme. It also describes the school context, explaining how CCE is delivered within the specific school where the activity took place. Together, these sections highlight the differences that occur at the country and school levels in relation to CCE national guidelines and approaches (see [Chapter 1](#)).

The activities tackle one or more key aspects of CCE in democratic learning environments, with a common feature: the use and implementation of active and experiential learning

methodologies. These approaches are aimed at engaging students directly, encouraging them to explore and understand contemporary issues in a meaningful way. Examples include:

- **Project-based learning from Brazil.** Inspired by a training program from a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), this project explores Brazilian Black Awareness Day and examines the roots of contemporary Brazilian societies from historic and geographic perspectives. Conducted over a medium to long period, the project takes place at the classroom level but has strong potential to impact the whole school.
- **Debate tournament in collaboration with the Trentino Historical Museum Foundation from Trento, Italy.** Focused on political themes, this activity forms part of a wider debate tournament implemented in the Autonomous Province of Trento, in Northern Italy. The activity highlights how collaboration with local institutions can deepen civic learning and engagement.
- **Project-based flash mob against gender violence from Rome, Italy.** Initiated by the students, this project involved NGOs, local authorities, and the community. Students organized and carried out a flash mob, demonstrating how civic learning in the classroom can extend into impactful real-world action.
- **Debate on voting and elections from Slovenia.** Students prepare for a debate by searching for and critically evaluating information online. Using lateral reading as a civic online reasoning strategy provides opportunities to assess sources and also engage in a structured discussion about democratic participation.
- **Role play on social stratification from the Netherlands.** Students take part in a simulation of the social ladder and then discuss and reflect on social standing and inequality. The activity prompts critical discussions on social stratification and its implications.

For all the activities listed to be meaningful and successful, it is essential that a positive and open classroom climate be built. Alongside the activities, the democratic learning environment can be further strengthened by using formative assessment for students' evaluation or adopting a cooperative learning approach (see [Chapter 4](#)).

The wide range of teaching approaches and strategies, together with the many ways in which the classroom connects to the outside world (whether through collaboration with other classes, whole-school initiatives, or involving NGOs and local authorities), illustrates the diversity and richness of CCE activities. These activities highlight the multi-perspective nature of CCE and its capacity to engage learners in meaningful and varied ways.

5.2 Strengthening Civic Education and Cultural Identity. An Example from Brazil

Maribel Alves Fierro Sevilla

5.2.1 Civic and Citizenship Education in Brazil

In Brazil, civic and citizenship education (CCE) is not a separate subject in the school curriculum but rather a theme addressed across subject areas in an integrated way. It

is present in the humanities (history, geography, philosophy, sociology, and religious education), as well as arts and languages. The inclusion of these contents is shaped by national curriculum guidelines, which emphasize the importance of citizenship and democratic participation in building critical, engaged citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Since these guidelines are not mandatory, how CCE is delivered depends on the initiative of managers, teachers, and external partnerships, often linked to nongovernmental institutions and specialized agencies. With thousands of schools and over one million teachers in Brazil, the absence of mandatory national guidelines results in differences in curricula across schools and classrooms. As a consequence, the development of students' civic awareness often depends on the individual efforts of educators and on external initiatives, which are rarely coordinated throughout students' educational journeys.

Furthermore, the decentralization of basic education in Brazil creates a scenario where different educational systems coexist. This flexibility fosters the development of diverse pedagogical practices and encourages innovation and experimentation in knowledge production. It is also essential given the large differences existing within the Brazilian school system, which reflect the varied characteristics of its vast territory, as well as the cultural and socioeconomic diversity of its population.

Many nongovernmental organizations work in different regions of Brazil to strengthen CCE. The example presented below was inspired by a training program from the Instituto Auschwitz, which participates in the National Network for Citizenship Education (RedeNEC). This network identifies 115 different organizations dedicated to strengthening democratic culture in Brazil by connecting to and inspiring the citizenship education ecosystem (<http://redenec.org>).

School: Centro de Ensino Fundamental 306 Norte, Brasília, Brazil

Civic and citizenship education at Centro de Ensino Fundamental 306 Norte (CEF 306 Norte)

CEF 306 Norte is a public urban school located in Brasília, Brazil. The school serves students from primary education cycles up to the seventh grade and operates within a framework of democratic management, inclusive education, and interdisciplinary learning.

Classroom activities at CEF 306 Norte focus on active student participation through interdisciplinary projects, integrating subjects such as history, geography, sociology, language, and arts to promote critical thinking, civic engagement, and respect for diversity. The school management actively encourages community participation by involving parents, students, and teachers in decision-making processes through surveys, meetings, and assemblies.

The classroom environment mirrors this commitment, integrating citizenship education, diversity, and sustainability. These are guided by the local curriculum framework, which identifies education for diversity and citizenship, education for human rights, and education for sustainability as cross-cutting themes to be taught across subject disciplines.

The classroom project described below took place in a seventh-grade classroom.

5.2.2 Project: “One Day, One Month, a Whole Life With Awareness!” Black History and Human Rights

This project took place in a Portuguese language class, inspired by Black Awareness Day, which was established as a national holiday in 2003. The project combined themes of Black history and human rights within an inclusive and participatory setting, fostering dialogue, reflection, and collaboration. Students engaged in meaningful discussions on historical and social issues through the lens of language learning.

When a student asked why an “awareness day” should be commemorated, the teacher explained that equal rights remain a global concern. To illustrate, he showed a banner from Black History Month in the United States of America (USA), emphasizing that the discussion extends beyond a single day to a full month dedicated to examining how racism, prejudice, and intolerance can harm society. Teaching CCE in the context of a Portuguese language class resulted in a project-based learning approach, incorporating diverse media productions into a year-long project. Throughout the school year, the teacher organized a series of activities to broaden opportunities for reflection on human rights, embedding awareness as part of an ongoing, lifelong learning process.

Project objectives:

The project’s main objective is to foster knowledge and promote reflection on the history and rights of the Black population, both in Brazil and worldwide, highlighting aspects of culture, identity, and the fight against racism. In addition, it seeks to develop critical awareness and appreciation of diversity in students through the analysis of historical events, concepts of citizenship, and human rights using language skills. This project aims to develop and strengthen language, as this skill is seen as a fundamental life skill that empowers individuals to engage with the world, advocate for change, and build bridges of understanding.

Content:

Under the theme “Black Awareness Day,” students examine the trajectory of the Afro-descendant population in Brazil, their contribution to society, and the challenges they have faced in different historical and geographical contexts.

Materials:

The teacher prepares a banner as a visual display that highlights key information about the Afro-descendant population. The purpose of the banner is to showcase prominent Afro-descendant figures in Brazil and present statistical data and visual representations of Afro-descendant populations in Brazil and in the USA.

Roles of teachers and students:

The teacher prepares the banner and selects additional instructional materials, such as United Nations Women videos or hip-hop music videos on human rights, encouraging students to engage in critical analysis and to apply persuasive and argumentative language in their work. Acting as a mediator, the teacher comments on the information presented, guides research, and organizes and facilitates discussions.

Students, meanwhile, are invited to collaborate on a portfolio exploring African Brazilian influences. They actively engage in discussion groups, share their perceptions, and build a deeper, collective understanding of the topics covered. This makes the learning process more interactive, reflective, and meaningful. The final stage of the project involves students presenting the results of their work in a school exhibition.

5.2.3 Project Launch and Student Engagement

The project includes five activities.

Activity 1: Exploring the messages behind the banner (10–15 minutes)**Teachers:**

The teacher brings a large, illustrated banner and displays it where all students can clearly see it. This invites active observation, encouraging students to explore visual and textual details, ask questions, and participate more spontaneously. Then, the teacher reads aloud and discusses the description of Black History Month and Black Awareness Day with open-ended questions such as:

- Have you heard of Black Awareness Day? How is it celebrated here?
- Do you identify with any important figure from Black culture?
- What do you know about the history of Afro-descendant people in Brazil?

(If students cannot remember, give some examples to initiate conversation, such as Zumbi dos Palmares and Gunga in Brazil.)

- Can you mention an important Afro-descendant figure in other countries?

(Examples: Martin Luther King in the United States, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, etc.)

The teacher asks students to organize themselves into groups of three or more and to search online for examples or influences from African Brazilian culture; the students must decide who will be the note-taker to prepare ideas for presentation. The teacher supports the class with creating categories such as music, food, fashion, leadership, traditions, and so on, to group their findings. The teacher must also ensure students

understand the task: students will produce a short written brief about the list of items influenced by the African culture that have been identified for grading.

Students:

In their groups, students brainstorm about things they believe have been influenced by African Brazilian culture and produce a plan for disseminating their findings.

Students connect the content to their individual experiences and cultural identities through the open-ended questioning. They research African Brazilian and global Black figures, discuss the context and the struggles these figures faced, and reflect on the broader implications. This not only validates their backgrounds but also encourages critical analysis and meaningful engagement with the topic.

Activity 2: Comparing the data and group discussion (20–30 minutes)**Teachers:**

The teacher reads aloud the population statistics (e.g., African Brazilian: 56.1% / African American: 12.6%) displayed in the banner and uses guiding questions to encourage initial observation, spark curiosity, and begin to challenge assumptions:

- What are your first thoughts when you see these numbers?
- Does a larger population mean more representation and equality?
- Why might people of African descent in both Brazil and the USA still face discrimination?

Students:

In their small groups, students analyze and compare the data.

Students compare demographic data and explore how statistics relate to real-world experiences of inequality. Students share insights, build on each other's observations, and form deeper understandings of systemic issues through different perspectives.

Activity 3: Think-share-reflect circle (15–20 minutes)**Teachers:**

The teacher uses the following question to prompt students:

- Even in countries with different histories and population sizes (e.g., the USA), Black communities still face similar inequalities. Why do you think this happens?

Each student is then asked to write a short response. Afterward, the class forms a circle for discussion, where every student shares one idea or question with the class.

Students:

In their small groups, students implement research on the Black populations of Brazil and the USA to answer the question proposed by the teacher. They build data literacy and collaborative discussion, laying the foundation for critical thought.

The think-share-reflect circle deepens student capacity to express themselves by combining individual reflection followed by verbal sharing. The circle format fosters a

respectful space for students to express viewpoints, voice doubts, and connect their reflections to broader social realities. At the same time, it builds data literacy and collaborative discussion skills, laying a strong foundation for critical thinking.

Activity 4: Mini debate—real data, real issues (30–40 minutes)

Teachers:

The teacher introduces debate topics for the students, for example:

- Does a larger Afro-descendant population mean more equality?
- Are symbolic celebrations (like Black Awareness Day or Black History Month) enough to fight racism?
- What role should schools play in addressing racial inequality?

The teacher also assigns students to “agree” or “disagree” sides, even if it’s not their personal opinion (to foster empathy and argumentation), and suggests a structured debate format, for example:

- Opening statement (1 minute per team)
- Argument round (2–3 minutes each)
- Rebuttal round (1–2 minutes)
- Final thoughts

Students:

Students are required to formulate arguments, consider opposing viewpoints, and articulate evidence-based claims. The structured debate format scaffolds the discussion, giving students a clear framework for expressing and defending ideas while remaining respectful of different perspectives. By assigning debate positions that may differ from students’ personal beliefs, the activity fosters empathy and flexibility in thinking.

Activity 5: Closing reflection

Teachers:

The teacher prompts students with reflective questions to guide their thinking:

- What did I learn today about race, representation, and how statistics can help us understand society?
- How can I use my voice to make a difference?

Students:

Students reflect individually or in groups on the questions provided and summarize their responses. These reflections will be compiled into a summary entry for their activity portfolio, expressing both personal insights and collective conclusions about the class.

The closing reflection allows learners to consolidate their experiences and articulate what they’ve learned about race, representation, and social equity and consider how they might use their voices for advocacy and change. Self-assessment and peer feedback are encouraged to foster metacognition and student agency. This holistic evaluation

process values both the learning journey and the final outcome, reinforcing the core principles of project-based learning.

School involvement:

At the end of the activity, the banner is displayed in the school by the students, creating a space for debate and awareness among other students and teachers from different classrooms.

**Tips for carrying out the activity**

To implement the “One Day, One Month, a Whole Life with Awareness!” activity effectively in different educational settings, it is essential to adapt it to local contexts, engage students in meaningful discussions, and foster critical thinking. Teachers can tailor the content by highlighting historical and social issues relevant to their country or region. Alternatively, students can research racial demographics and contributions of Afro-descendant populations worldwide, making the discussion more relatable to their environment.

Preparing engaging and accessible materials is key to capturing students’ interest. Teachers can use visual aids such as banners, infographics, and posters to help summarize key information effectively, while videos, music, and storytelling make the learning experience dynamic. Teachers should incorporate articles, news reports, and literary excerpts that address race, identity, and human rights from multiple perspectives. Where digital resources are limited, students can create handmade banners or use digital tools such as PowerPoint, Canva, or Google Slides to design virtual presentations.

Creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment is crucial for discussions on race, discrimination, and human rights. Teachers should establish a respectful and open space where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts without fear of judgment, reinforcing mutual respect and active listening. Teachers should also be prepared to address sensitive topics with historical and legal context, ensuring students engage in factual and well-informed discussions.

5.3 Debating on Politics. An Example From Trento, Italy

Tatiana Arrigoni

5.3.1 Civic and Citizenship Education in Italy

In 2019, a new subject was introduced in the Italian school curricula, *educazione civica* (civic education). One of its main goals is to prepare young people for active and responsible citizenship in a democratic society. The introduction of this subject was accompanied by national guidelines, which were subsequently revised in 2024.

The Italian guidelines prescribe a cross-curricular approach to *educazione civica* and identify three key pillars to structure curricula at the school level and learning pathways at the classroom level:

1. Italian Constitution
2. Economic Development and Sustainability
3. Digital Citizenship

Due to its historical and cultural background, the Province of Trento (Trentino) holds a special political status in Italy, with a large degree of autonomy in many areas, including education. This autonomy influenced how *educazione civica* was implemented in the province. The subject was renamed *educazione civica e alla cittadinanza* (civic and citizenship education) to emphasize its role in creating opportunities for students to actively contribute to community life.

To support this localized approach, special guidelines were developed and issued in August 2020. The Provincial Institute for Educational Research and Experimentation (IPRASE) was tasked with assisting schools in the implementation of these guidelines, providing both technical and pedagogical support.

School: Collegio Arcivescovile Celestino Endrici, Trento, Italy

Civic and citizenship education at Collegio Arcivescovile, Celestino Endrici

Collegio Arcivescovile is a private school in Trento that offers primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education. Due to its private status, the school is relatively small, with a limited number of classes per school year, and pupils per class. Collegio Arcivescovile is explicitly committed to a person-centered approach to teaching and learning, where participation is strongly encouraged at both the classroom and institution levels.

The school is part of a wide network of associations and institutions that are actively involved in community life, both in extracurricular settings and in collaboration with schools. These partnerships support a range of

initiatives, including service-learning activities in Italy and abroad, financial education projects, and contests on civic education topics.

The activity described took place in collaboration with one of these partner institutions, the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino (the Trentino Historical Museum Foundation), and was supervised by the Provincial Institute for Educational Research and Experimentation. It was jointly implemented by the history and Italian language teachers as part of the class's *educazione civica e alla cittadinanza* (civic and citizenship education) program.

5.3.2 Background Context for the Debate Tournament

The activity was inspired by the debate tournament “A suon di parole,” which was first introduced in the Autonomous Province of Trento in 2015 (out of a joint initiative of IPRASE and the University of Trento) with the aim of promoting school debates in the province. Over time, “A suon di parole” has involved hundreds of students from both higher secondary and lower secondary schools in Trentino.

School debates can follow a variety of formats, with the World School Debate or the British Parliamentary Style being the most commonly used. For “A suon di parole,” a special format was designed with the specific aim of involving the entire class (coached by one teacher), instead of only a selected group of students. Each participant takes on specific roles according to their individual skills and interests, such as searching for information, formulating and delivering arguments, or carefully listening to opposing views in order to analyze them and respond effectively.

The format was designed to help students develop active listening skills and learn how to mediate between differing perspectives so as to contribute to the development of a culture of dialogue and respect for diversity.

The “A suon di parole” debate session takes place in three phases over the course of one lesson:

1. First round—presentation of arguments:
Each class presents three prepared arguments (up to 3 minutes each) in support of one of two opposing interpretations of a common issue (e.g., “What is more relevant in fighting climate change: institutional or personal initiative?”).
2. Second round—drafting counterarguments:
During a 20-minute break between the first and third rounds, each class develops reasoned counterarguments in response to the competitor class. The goal is to highlight both the weaknesses and strengths in the opposing team’s reasoning.

3. Third round—presentation of counterarguments:

Each class delivers their counterarguments (up to 3 minutes each), directly addressing and challenging the positions presented in the first round.

A three-member panel adjudicates the debate session based on shared criteria known to the students in advance. These criteria assess both content (e.g., logical structure, wealth, relevance, reliability of information, language use) as well as formal qualities (e.g., oratory, style, persuasiveness).

Teachers in the role of debate coaches also consider additional aspects for evaluation, such as collaboration skills, respect for diversity, and tolerance of ambiguity. Self-evaluation by students is encouraged as a follow-up activity and was also used in the example presented here, allowing learners to reflect on their performance and overall process.

5.3.3 Adapting the Debate Tournament for a Specific Class

The debate activity described here took place in a *terza liceo* class (11th grade) but can be easily adapted for lower classes. Similar activities take place in Trentino in lower secondary schools, from the sixth to the eighth grades, as well as in the 9th and 10th grades of upper secondary schools. The activity was inspired by the “A suon di parole” tournament but was conducted independently, tailored to the specific needs of the single class involved. For the debate session, the class was divided into two groups, which were jointly prepared and trained by both the teachers responsible for the activity. The main goal was to engage students in an in-depth and critical exploration of the institutional structure of the Province of Trento, a territory with a higher degree of political autonomy than other Italian regions, and to prompt reflection on its implications for active citizenship.

Although these topics are part of the *educazione civica e alla cittadinanza* curriculum in the Province of Trento, they are often perceived by young people as difficult and uninteresting. This activity aimed to make the subject matter more accessible and relevant through active participation and debate.

The overall activity was structured as follows:

Preparation (one week):

Teachers provided information on the issues related to the debate topic, and students did further research in groups.

Debate (two weeks):

The debate phase began with the announcement of the motions: “Autonomy in Trentino: a no longer tenable privilege” versus “Autonomy in Trentino: a model to be promoted.” Two debating groups were formed, and each was assigned one of the motions. Students then prepared their arguments in advance.

During the debate session, both teams delivered arguments focusing on Trentino’s historical heritage and its responsibility for shaping its future political role within broader

national and European contexts. They also developed and presented counterarguments in response to the opposing team's position.

Follow-up session (individual homework after the debate session):

Students filled in a meta-reflection form prepared by the teachers, including questions on how the activity has transformed their knowledge and their views on the issue as well as on their role as Trentino citizens.

A distinctive feature of this activity was the composition of the panel adjudicating the debate. In addition to members of the school staff (other than the teachers responsible), the panel included an expert from the local research center Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino. This expert provided students with detailed feedback on the arguments they presented, responded to questions raised during both the preparation and debate sessions, and shared additional information about materials and sources on Trentino's autonomy as well as opportunities for political participation.

Throughout all stages of the debate (e.g., preparation, debate session, exchange with the expert, and the follow-up), the teachers closely observed students' work to collect evidence for assessment. The evaluation focused not only on students' knowledge of the specific content and the quality of their argumentation but also on their collaboration skills and the development of self-efficacy.

The activity required no special facilities. The regular classroom was sufficient for both the preparation and the follow-up phases. The debate session took place in the school auditorium, while two separate rooms were allocated to the debating groups for developing their counterarguments.

Tips for carrying out the activity

The debating activity can be easily adapted for different educational contexts. Motions of debate can be formulated to engage younger pupils and prompt them to critically examine citizenship-related issues (e.g., collaboration versus competition in community life, freedom versus control in teenagers' use of digital devices). Each debate can be introduced by a preparation phase (including group work and targeted lectures by teachers), followed by a meta-reflection. This structure supports students in developing a deeper understanding of the issues discussed and greater self-awareness. Where possible, contributions from experts from local institutions should be considered. Engaging with external specialists provides students with an effective way to discover relevant, locally available resources, and offers opportunities for civic action within their communities.

5.4 Let Our Voice Against Gender Violence Be Heard! Flashmob. An Example From Rome, Italy

Tiziana Morgante

School: Istituto Comprensivo Piersanti Mattarella, Rome, Italy

Civic and citizenship education at Istituto Comprensivo Piersanti Mattarella

The Istituto Comprensivo Piersanti Mattarella comprises pre-primary (ages 3 to 6), primary (first to fifth grades), and lower secondary education (sixth to eighth grades).

As part of civic education, the Institute has been implementing the “Girls’ and Boys’ Parliament” project since the 2022/2023 school year. This project was created to stimulate student interest and increase their participation and decision-making related to school activities. To achieve this, representatives from the fourth to eighth grades meet in an assembly where, in cooperation with teachers, they discuss, listen to one another, and make proposals about classroom/school activities. Through these critical discussions and continuous cooperation between peers, they organize projects linked to certain days in the civic calendar.

Before each Parliament session, students discuss with their classmates and decide collectively on the topics they want to address in a project. With the help of the teachers, they often collaborate with local and national organizations (Save the Children, the scouts, the Municipality of Rome,¹ etc.) to develop these initiatives.

During the years, the school has carried out different projects related to the following national and international commemorative days:

- World Water Day (March 22),
- National Day in Memory of Mafia Victims (March 21)
- National Day of Legality (May 23)
- International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27)
- World Children’s Day (November 20)
- International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25)

¹ Rome is divided into 15 municipalities (*municipi*) for administrative purposes. Each municipality has a president, chosen by direct election, and a municipal council, consisting of six councilors.

5.4.1 Background of the Flash Mob Project

The students involved in the student parliament expressed great interest in the topic of gender-based violence, as they considered it one of the most unacceptable forms of violence. For this reason, every year the students planned to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25) with different activities both in the classroom and at the school level.

In 2023, the Parliament suggested organizing a flash mob in the neighborhood. The students expressed a desire to have their voices heard beyond the school walls and asked to do the project in a place common to their everyday lives. The approach used was project-based learning and involved pupils from primary school (fourth grade) to lower secondary school (eighth grade).

5.4.2 The Flash Mob Project

The project aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- to improve students' communication skills;
- to develop students' planning and organizational skills;
- to promote students' sense of autonomy and responsibility; and
- to develop students' problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills.

With the support of the teachers, all classes followed a common structure, but differentiated the work according to the school levels (primary school versus lower secondary school). The activities (listed below) may span across two months of classes, depending on the student's involvement.

Preparatory research activities on the theme:

Primary school: students were involved in workshops on gender-based violence delivered by the nongovernmental organization, Save the Children.

Lower secondary school: students conducted research on the web about femicide in Italy and the victims of violence using different sources (reports, newspaper articles, and statistical sources).

Preparation of materials:

Students created posters in the shape of a red shoe (the symbol against gender-based violence in Italy), displaying thoughts and poems.

Each student created a paper rose or paper flower with a card to give to women in the public they met during the flash mob.

Create a slogan:

All participating classes were tasked with creating a slogan in both Italian and English. Each class was then asked to vote on their favorite slogan, with the most popular selected. The slogan chosen was "For women, respect and love, no more anger, give a flower!" ("Per le donne rispetto e amore, basta rabbia, regalate un fiore!").

The flash mob:

The flash mob took place in a neighborhood square, near the school. The children came out of school and marched into the main square of the neighborhood with red balloons, flowers, and posters. All the students wore red clothing and made a sign on their faces in the same color. Then they stood in a circle occupying the whole square, waited for the signal, and shouted the slogan all together, repeating it several times, and finally, threw the red balloons up in the air.

Numerous people from the neighborhood stopped to observe the flash mob (and several elderly people looked out from balconies to watch), while many others joined the march. Additionally, parents also participated in the flash mob by following their children in the march and forming a circle around the children in the square. At the conclusion of the event, representatives of the municipality made a short speech.

The teachers of all the participating classes met regularly to organize and monitor the activity. They checked students' progress, observed group work, supervised their activities, and provided feedback. The classes often shared and worked on common documents (books, articles, poems) in a continuous exchange between teachers of different subjects. Local authorities (traffic policemen, representatives of the municipality, particularly the president of the municipality and the councilor for educational policy) and the scout group of the local parish were invited to participate in the event.

Tips for carrying out the activity

It is important to first discuss with students a topic that is important to them and that is relevant in today's society. The choice of the topic should be theirs, as this encourages participation, and the teachers' role is to support them through these discussions.

For the flash mob planning, teachers engage their classes in research activities to explore the topic of the project in more depth. They could also involve external organizations and nongovernmental organizations to implement a workshop on the flash mob theme (this kind of activity is especially suitable for primary school students). This process involves close collaboration among teachers to coordinate efforts.

Students should also be given opportunities to work autonomously and in small groups to produce material useful for the flash mob. Teachers can support by organizing meetings with students from different classes to plan the event collaboratively.

If needed, teachers can assist students in communicating their decisions to the wider school community by taking minutes. Student communications must be clear and informative, indicating materials, activities, and deadlines.

Teachers also have a key role in reaching out to local authorities and/or nongovernmental organizations and other external organizations. This can be done either directly or in collaboration with the students.

The flash mob is an activity aimed at communicating a message and raising awareness on a particular issue. The participation of the whole school, or at least several classes in the school, can make the activity more impactful. However, it can also be carried out with just one class, always trying to involve parent participation.

5.5 A Debate on Voting and Elections. An Example From Slovenia

Eva Klemenčič Mirazchiyski

5.5.1 Civic and Citizenship Education in Slovenia

In Slovenia, civic and citizenship education (CCE) is implemented into the curriculum both as a compulsory subject and through an “all-inclusive” approach. Compulsory education in Slovenia follows a unified structure of nine years of primary and lower-secondary education schooling. CCE is delivered in three ways: as a standalone subject; integrated into broader compulsory subjects such as history, geography, and the Slovene language; or as a cross-curricular objective taught by all teachers. Similar approaches to CCE can also be found at the upper secondary level.

For the separate subject approach, there is a compulsory subject, patriotic and citizenship culture and ethics, that is followed in the seventh and eighth grades. This subject is taught for 35 hours per school year, which equals one hour per week. In the ninth grade, students can choose an optional subject titled citizenship culture. However, the elective is only chosen by a small number of students.

The compulsory subject in the seventh grade covers the following four thematic units:

1. The individual, communities, and the state.
2. The community of citizens of the Republic of Slovenia.
3. Slovenia is founded on human rights.
4. Beliefs, religions, and the state.

In the eighth grade, the thematic units are:

1. A closer look at democracy.
2. Finance, work, and the economy.
3. Slovenia, the European Union, and the world.
4. The global community.

The syllabus is the same across Slovenia (although, like all syllabuses at the moment, it is currently being updated). Importantly, Slovenia follows a learning objectives-based

approach. This means learning goals and knowledge standards are prioritized over the topics—at least in principle.

Teachers and schools have autonomy in how they deliver CCE content. However, they are recommended to draw on examples from both the immediate and broader environment (school, local community, etc.). The use of modern teaching methods and approaches is encouraged, with an emphasis on guiding students toward independent and critical thinking. Special emphasis is also placed on individualization and differentiation, as well as cross-curricular integration.

There are no specialist teachers for CCE in Slovenia. The CCE subject is taught by generalist teachers and is graded.

School: OŠ Dobrova, Slovenia

Civic and citizenship education at the primary and lower secondary school, OŠ Dobrova

OŠ Dobrova, located in central Slovenia, comprises the first to ninth grades. It strengthens students' civic learning by creating a democratic learning environment and making considerable use of debate as a teaching method, particularly when addressing civic and citizenship education. Debates are often organized around a statement related to citizenship, with students asked to prepare speeches in support of or against the statement.

Debates are also used beyond classroom practice, during debate tournaments organized by external organizations, such as ZIP Institute (Pro et Contra-Institute for the Culture of Dialogue). An example of a citizenship-related debate statement is "Voting should be mandatory." Through this activity, the focus is not only placed on democratic dialogue and participation within the classroom level but also on fostering engagement in broader civic contexts.

5.5.2 Context for "A Closer Look at Democracy" Theme

"A Closer Look at Democracy" is one of the mandatory thematic units in the eighth grade syllabus for the subject of patriotic and citizenship culture and ethics. When covering the topic of democracy, students are presented with several statements that either reflect the situation in their country or could apply to it. Students are divided into groups, and the activity lasts two school hours. Each group consists of six students. The first hour is dedicated to preparation, followed by the implementation of the activity in the second hour.

5.5.3 A Debate on Voting and Elections

In this activity students practice their public speaking skills and critical thinking.

The objectives of the activity are:

- To understand voting rights and duties.
- To reinforce knowledge about democracy.
- To recognize the importance of secret ballots.
- To learn about the media and the role of election campaigns.

Start of the activity:

Students are divided into four groups, for which the teacher presents four statements:

1. Voting should be mandatory.
2. The voting age should be from age 16.
3. Voting should be public.
4. All candidates should be given equal media time for their campaigns.

Preparation (one lesson):

Students prepare to either defend or argue against the statement. They must research the arguments that support the statement as well as those that oppose it. During this process, the teacher acts as a mentor, ensuring that students incorporate the knowledge standards prescribed by the syllabus. Students are also encouraged to critically assess the reliability of the information found. Starting from the original online sources, they check additional sites on the same topic or claim, practicing techniques such as click restraint and opening new tabs to compare perspectives, both horizontally and vertically. Students have to keep track of their *critical reading* strategies by taking notes on how they searched and analyzed the reliability of the information. These insights are then discussed in a follow-up session after the debate, focused on the processes activated during the activity.

Debate (one lesson):

Students defend their side and aim to present stronger arguments than the opposing team. While debate tournaments follow a specific format, in the classroom the approach must be adapted to fit within one lesson.

During the debate, the teacher acts as a moderator and timekeeper. Each of the four groups is divided into two teams.

- The first speaker from the defending team defines key terms and presents two to three arguments (3 minutes).
- The first speaker from the opposing team then presents their arguments in the same way (3 minutes).
- The second speaker from the defending team builds on their team's arguments and refutes the opposing team's points (2 minutes).
- The second speaker from the opposing team does the same (2 minutes).

- Finally, the third speakers on both sides summarize key points of contention and deliver closing statements (2 minutes each).

One group's debate lasts about 20 minutes. Since there are four debate statements in total, two of them can be presented within one class hour (taking about 45 minutes).



Tips for carrying out the activity

When implementing this activity, it is important to support students in searching for and developing well-founded arguments. These arguments should not be based solely on personal opinions but must be supported with concrete data and real evidence. Where relevant, they should also align with the objectives of the school subject in which the activity is being conducted.

The activity is very engaging for students, can be applied to a variety of topics, and is easily adaptable to different school contexts. Choosing an appropriately challenging topic is crucial: it should be challenging enough to require research and critical thinking but not so difficult that it becomes overwhelming. The activity is also suitable for other civic and citizenship education-related themes such as globalization, global issues, environmental challenges, and many others.

This activity combines two key strategies for civic and citizenship education—lateral reading apprenticeship for civic online reasoning and debate—and highlights their interconnections, depending on the chosen topic. Additionally, elements of cooperative learning can be incorporated to further enhance collaboration and peer interaction.

5.6 A Classroom Role-Play Activity: Understanding the Social Ladder. An Example From The Netherlands

Remmert Daas

5.6.1 Civic and Citizenship Education in the Netherlands

Promoting citizenship and social cohesion is an official requirement for primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands. Citizenship education should (at least) be aimed at

- promoting respect for and knowledge of fundamental democratic values;
- promoting social and citizenship competences; and
- promoting knowledge of and respect for diversity and equality.

Schools in tertiary vocational education are also required to teach citizenship, the legal contents of which are currently undergoing revision. Schools in the Netherlands

generally have relatively high autonomy in planning citizenship education (Schulz et al., 2025), provided they abide by legislation and work towards the broadly framed national learning aims. The objectives of citizenship education are considered a responsibility of the whole school throughout primary, secondary, and vocational education. However, citizenship education is most strongly tied to social subjects, particularly civics (Nieuwelink & Oostdam). Civics is a mandatory one-year course in upper secondary education, which teaches knowledge about society and reasoning skills. Schools in vocational education typically offer the subject citizenship. The Netherlands has a tracked education system: the upper secondary vocational track spans the ninth and 10th grades (ages 14 to 16); the upper secondary general track spans the 10th and 11th grades (ages 15 to 17); and the upper secondary academic track spans the 10th through 12th grades (ages 15 to 18). Students from the vocational track generally move on to vocational education, spanning the 11th to 12th or 13th grades. The contents of civics education differ between tracks, though the general aims overlap. For more information on citizenship education in the Netherlands, see De Groot et al. (2022).

School: ID College, Leiden, the Netherlands

Civic and citizenship education at ID College, Leiden

ID College (currently mboRijnland) was a school for vocational education (11th to 13th grades) with approximately 10,000 students over multiple locations and cities in the west of the Netherlands. The activity described here was taught at a school in Leiden to students in the 11th grade (ages 16 and 17) enrolled in a program for social care. The activity described below was taught within the context of the subject of citizenship, which all students attended as a mandatory course with weekly lessons. Citizenship was not formally tied to professional training or internships, but the teacher did make it a point to regularly address students in their role as future practitioners in social care.

5.6.2 Simulating the Social Ladder

According to data from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2022, role-play appears to be used relatively little in citizenship education (Schulz et al., 2025). This makes it worthwhile to consider what a role-play activity might look like in practice. The activity described here aims to visualize the notions of social standing and social stratification. It is designed to help students explore the notions of social standing and social stratification. Through simulation, students experience what it means to occupy different social positions. The activity also includes guided reflection, where

students are invited to share their perspectives on the implications of these differences and critically examine their viewpoints.

The activity is designed for a group of approximately 25 students (the maximum number of students is tied to the size of the room). Preparation time with students takes approximately 10 minutes, followed by role-play and in-class discussion, which take about 15 minutes, and a final 10 minutes for reflection. The activity was designed for students aged 16.

At the start of the activity, all students are randomly assigned a role with different social status (i.e., their “character”). The activity aims to let students experience how people in society are differently positioned in terms of the resources they have access to. To make these differences tangible, students start at one end of the classroom, all looking the same way. The teacher calls out 25 questions. If a student’s character would answer “yes,” they take a step forward, and if the character would answer “no,” the student stays where they are. This way, after 25 questions, students end up at very different positions on the “social ladder.” After the activity, students reflect on their attitudes towards these differences and the possible role the government might take in dealing with these differences.

(Example character descriptions and role-play questions are included at the end of the example).

Activity learning aims:

- Students can explain the meaning of social standing.
- Students can express their attitudes towards social inequality and the role of government in providing social services.
- Students can reflect on their beliefs about the extent to which society facilitates equality of opportunity.

Preparation:

The teacher explains the purposes of the activity to the students: experiencing and learning about different social positions people in society have, reflecting on what that means in terms of inequality, and discussing the government’s response to those differences. To achieve this, all students are randomly handed a character description that should not be shared with their peers.

The teacher gives all students a card that briefly describes a person’s characteristics (e.g., age, occupation, etc.). The teacher asks students not to share their role and take some time to think about their character’s background: *Where do you live? What does a typical day or week look like for you? Do you have a lot of friends? How much money do you have?* Etc.

Role-play:

When students have gotten into character, they stand shoulder to shoulder at one end of the classroom. The teacher informs the students that 25 questions are going to be called out (e.g., *do you have little trouble finding a job? Are you able to buy a home?*). If the students’ character would answer “yes” to that question, they take a step forward;

otherwise, they stay in place. If students aren't sure what to answer, they answer what they think would be most likely. When students have answered the final question, they stay in their position for the discussion.

Discussion:

The teacher asks questions to students standing in different positions in the classroom: *What did it feel like to move all the way to the front? What did it feel like to stay all the way in the back? What roles did the students who answered "no" most of the time have? What characteristics did the students who answered "yes" most of the time have?* Gradually, the questions are directed more to the notions of social standing in society: *Do students also see these differences in society around them? How do people arrive at these different positions? What should the role of government be in relation to these differences?*

Reflection:

After the lesson, students individually complete an assignment in which they are asked to reflect on the activity and what it represents. Questions two to eight are about their own views and not those of their character:

1. What role did you play in the social ladder game?
2. Do you think you took enough steps? Why?
3. What did you think of the difference in the number of steps between the different roles?
4. Consider differences.
 - a) Do you also see these differences in society around you? Are these differences large?
 - b) Do you think these differences are fair? Explain why you think so.
5. What positive consequences can social differences have?
6. What negative consequences can social differences have?
7. How do you think you should act toward people at the top or bottom of the social ladder? Explain your answer.
8. How do you think the government should act toward people at the top or bottom of the social ladder? Explain your answer.

Tips for carrying out the activity

The simulation of a social ladder activity was designed to be carried out in upper-secondary or vocational education (i.e., students aged 15 or older). To facilitate younger students, teachers could consider using character descriptions that are more familiar to their age and use fewer and more simplified questions for the activity.

The characters students are assigned should reflect people who clearly take different social positions in society. At the same time, there is a risk of reinforcing stereotypes students may hold about certain (groups of) people.



Teachers should be aware of this and assess during the activity whether this calls for attention.

The characters and questions included, although adapted, reflect relevant policies in the Netherlands. To implement the activity in other countries, teachers should consider what social groups, viewpoints, or issues are relevant to their context.

5.6.3 Acknowledgements

The activity was taught by Malty Mahadew, a former civics teacher in Dutch vocational education. The lesson is based on an example provided in the *Handbook for Teaching Civics* by Olgers et al. (2014), in which the original design is attributed to Wanda Hoogenhout, a civics teacher in Dutch secondary education. The reflection assignment was designed by Remmert Daas as part of his dissertation on assessment of citizenship competences.

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Example character descriptions and role-play questions for the role-play classroom activity from the Netherlands

Character descriptions:

- You are 18 years old and just graduated from secondary school.
- You are a 22-year-old male and you are studying at university. Your parents are both from Morocco.
- You are a 35-year-old successful businessman.
- You are a 24-year-old male, an Orthodox Muslim in traditional clothing.
- You are a 35-year-old beautician. You and your partner both have steady jobs.
- You are 38 years old, working part-time for the municipality. Together with your husband, who works at the bank, you have a 3-year-old son.
- You are 17 years old and an orphan (your parents are deceased).
- You are a tax advisor, and you have been looking for a job for a year and a half because you are unemployed.
- You are 45 years old and working as a journalist.
- You are a member of the House of Representatives for the Freedom Party.
- You are the director of a large international company, 4,000 people working for you.
- You are a 28-year-old man who has been struggling with alcohol addiction for a number of years. You have a temporary job as a garbage man.
- You are a 17-year-old girl who has become pregnant. The relationship with the child's father has ended. You live with your parents in an apartment.
- You are a single father with three children. You work as a branch manager at Mediamarkt.
- You are a principal of a secondary school.
- You are a 29-year-old car mechanic.
- You are a single mother of two children. You earn your money as an artist occasionally selling paintings.
- You are a 30-year-old social studies teacher who has just been diagnosed with a muscular disease.
- You are a 16-year-old. Both your parents were born in Morocco. You have dropped out of school and are unemployed. You meet your friends on the street.
- You are a 21-year-old student who lives in a rented room. You have a part-time job in a café.
- You are a 15-year-old secondary school student with good grades. Both of your parents work full-time.
- You are a 16-year-old girl who is physically disabled.
- You have just had your first child and are partially incapacitated for work due to medical complications during childbirth.
- You are a 28-year-old young man who works as a call center agent.
- You are a 23-year-old young illegal asylum seeker.
- You are a 58-year-old general practitioner.
- You are a 27-year-old furniture maker with a concentration disorder.
- You are a 84-year-old chronically ill lady. Your husband is deceased.

- You are a creative person who has been unemployed for 3 months, and you are offered a job as a store clerk.
- You are a 65-year-old bicycle repairman who is about to retire.
- You did not finish secondary school, and you now work as a deputy manager in a supermarket. You are 19 years old.
- You are a 61-year-old immigrant. You are unemployed.
- You are a 50-year-old and homeless.

Questions:

- Is it easy for you to find a job?
- Do you own a computer or laptop?
- Do you have friends who can help you find a job?
- Can your parents pay for your studies so that you do not have any student debt?
- Do you receive financial support, for example, a student loan?
- Do you have a secondary school diploma?
- Are you eligible for benefits for single parents?
- Do you ever donate money to charity?
- Sometimes, people don't get invited to job interviews because of their surname. Does that apply to you?
- Can you buy a house?
- Do you receive a subsidy from the municipality to pay for a sports subscription?
- Are you entitled to unemployment benefits?
- Can you support yourself if you become unemployed for more than a year?
- If you become ill for a long period of time, can you continue to pay your bills?
- If your child becomes disabled, can you provide the necessary care?
- Can you understand the letters you receive from public services?
- Is it financially feasible for you to have one or more children?
- Do you have access to good social and medical facilities?
- Do you have to worry about your own financial situation and future?
- If you were to lose your job, can you continue to live in your house?
- Can you go on holiday twice a year?
- Does the government pay for the costs of a necessary (medical) operation?
- Do you have to worry about finding work?
- Do you have a healthy lifestyle?
- Can you pay your housing costs and have enough money to do something fun every now and then?
- Do people generally have a positive image of you and the group you belong to?

Source

Daas, R., Sevilla, M.A.F., Mirazchiyski, E.K., Arrigoni, T., Morgante, T. (2026). Experiencing civic and citizenship education at school: Good practice examples from four ICCS countries. In: Damiani, V. (Ed.) *Experiencing Democracy in the Classroom*. IEA Research for Educators, vol 3. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-25449-8_5

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