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Promoting ACTIVE and Responsible Citizenship in Schools



Toolkit

II. Activity book for teachers

Activity 2a Actors - values, norms and biases

Understanding different actors and their perspectives

Part a) for issues we cannot directly influence



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Toolkit and activities for teachers

The Activity is part of the Toolkit which is composed of following three main parts:

- I. Methodology for teachers
- II. Activity book for teachers
- III. Working materials for activities&students

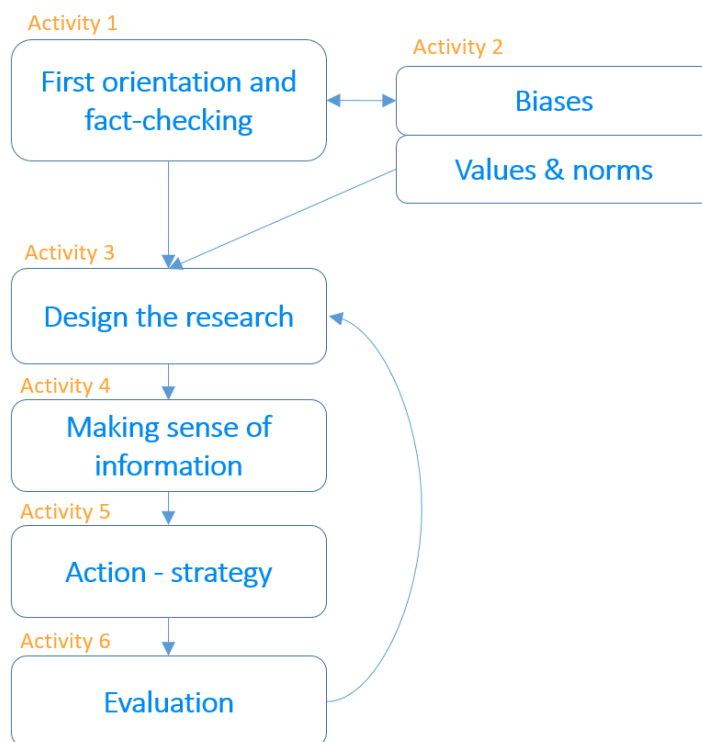
I. Methodology for teachers (*this document*) consists of explanation the principles and terms and concepts to be used when implementing the Toolkit. The goal of the methodology is to provide background and set the common ground and understanding for teachers so they are ready to take the Toolkit in to the classroom.

II. Activity book for teachers is a set of working activities (step by step scenarios) that the teachers can take in to the classroom. The activities correspond with the topics of the Methodology so teachers can easily find appropriate activity for the topic covered in the methodology. There at least one activity for a topic covered in the Methodology.

III. Working materials for activities&students provide materials to be used with students during the activities. Materials consists mainly of templates that teacher can hand over to students to better structure the activity.

Before you start with the Activity **get familiar with the relevant parts of the Methodology** for teachers and the overall composition and logic of the activities presented in the Activity book for teachers.

Logic of the activities in the ACTIVE Toolkit





ACTIVITY 2a: Understanding different actors and their perspectives (values, norms and biases)

The Activity has direct connection to the topics covered in the MODULE 2 of the Methodology. The knowledge about How to approach information on the internet from Module 1 will be also be used.

In the Activity 2a students will learn how to understand role of different actors and their perspectives about the concerned issue. In the process of **understanding the roles and perspectives of different actors** the students will also learn about themselves. They will explore their own assumptions, values and world views and will be exposed to their own biases.

The Activity 2a will further explore the issue already started in the Activity 1. Student will experience how to further **work with information** by identifying relevant actors, their roles, differing perspectives and underlying factors for these perspectives. Students will be also lead to also understand about how they perceive the issue and the involved actors and will be **confronted with their own biases**.

The **Activity 2a** is designed to be used with a topic where the students play more of a role of an “outside” observer analyzing the situation (situation where the students can not directly have communicating with the actors concerned). On the other hand **Activity 2b** will be relevant for issues where students play or can play active role and can directly approach the actors and communicate with them. So the Activity 2b will focus also on finding solution through direct communication with involved actors.

The Activity consists of the following steps:

- Step 1:* The topic – issue concerned (topic selection)
- Step 2:* *poss. First impression about the topic (when starting with Activity 2a)*
- Step 3:* Actors their roles and perceived perspectives – first impression
- Step 4:* Different roles of actors
- Step 5:* Different perspectives
- Step 6:* Biases

Expected outputs and outcomes of the activity

NOTE:

- For the Activity 2a it is expected to work with topic where the students are not direct participants of the issue and cannot directly communicate and “influence” the involved actors. If the issue concerned some local or school activity involving direct interaction with the actors follow the Activity 2b
- This activity can be used and done with students to **explore and deepen understanding of any topic**.
 - This can be any societal issue (cutting trees in Amazonia, war in Ukraine etc.) or topic connected to the theme that is part of regular class (geography, history, biology etc.)



- Or the Activity can be applied for a topic concerning the school, town or class (e.g. to find solutions for topics concerning opposing positions)
- We recommend to [start with Activity 1](#) but starting with Activity 2a is also possible:
 - Recommend to start with Activity 1 concerning topic more information based where you should first look at source of information
 - The knowledge from Activity 1 about fact checking will be used and further developed in the Activity 2a
 - Optionally start with Activity 2 concerning issues where primary are roles of different actors with differing opinions
- This Activity can be also done [as separate activity](#) with students concerning any topic where different opinions/perspective play important role.
 - As a teacher you can use this activity [even for one “interesting/important/influential” topic](#) you find “interesting” to be examined with students.
- The Activity 2 is introductory activity, this means that it will be followed with Activities 3 and 4 where the issue will be explored even further
 - The Activity 2 prepares ground for further research to be done (so do not worry to come to definite conclusions after this activity)
 - The Activity 2a should very well serve as basis for defining further research to find relevant evidence for the concerned points of view and considering the participating actors
 - The [Activity 3](#) could be done before Activity 2a, in justified cases where collecting information by research is needed in advance (the Activity 3 could be set after defining actors and their roles in step IV)

[Overall goal of the activity:](#) Explore role of actors and different perspectives and points of view on the issue concerned and understand the role biases play in our perception.

[The Problem:](#) People (students) face difficulties to be able to understand differing perspectives and opinions before making their own judgement and forming own opinion. The differing perspectives are often approached with already biased perspective that further distorts or just confirm what we have “believed” at the beginning. This approach can resolve by giving us non relevant or inaccurate information for responsible decisions. Secondly in this way our action is based only on our own (and thus biased) perception without considering the perspectives of others.

The MOTO of the Activity could be: We do not have to agree with someone but when looking for solution we should understand others and ourselves first. In this sense the Activity is exploring differing perspectives with putting emphasis on the underlying factors and biases.

[Assignment overview:](#)

- Student will identify relevant actors and their role in the concerned issue
- Students will explore different perspectives concerning the issue
- Students will examine the underling motivations of the concerned actors to better understand their different perspectives
- Students will explore their own biases

[Expected outputs of the activity:](#)



- ❖ Relevant actors and their perspectives about the issue are identified
- ❖ Underlining factors of differing perspectives of actors are understood
- ❖ Biases made by actors and students are described

Expected outcomes:

- ✚ Students understand concept of different roles of involved actors
- ✚ Students understand how are our judgements influenced by values, beliefs and norms
- ✚ Students understand different perspectives of actors
- ✚ Students understand underlying causes of differing perspectives
- ✚ Students understand the relevance of reliable information
- ✚ Students can identify their own biases and biases of others

Main principles from Methodology to be considered:

- ✚ Role of actors (Module 2, chapter 1.9)
- ✚ Factors influencing our perception (Module 2, chapter 1.1)
- ✚ Cognitive biases (Module 2, chapter 1.3)
- ✚ Problem definition (Module 0, chapter 1.3)
- ✚ How to approach information on the internet (Module 1, chapter 1.3)
 - General concepts concerning facts, data, information and objectivity (Module 0)
 - Disinformation, misinformation and fake-news (Module 0)
 - Understand criteria for quality of data and information (Module 1, chapter 1.1)
- ✚ Framing (Module 2, chapter 1.6)
- ✚ Role of social media to consider when trying to understand others (Module 2, chapter 1.7)
- ✚ Biases (Module 2, chapter 1.3)
- ✚ *recommended* Empathetic (nonviolent) communication (Module 2, chapter 1.4)
- ✚ *recommended* Logic, emotions and rationalization (Module 2, chapter 1.5)

Time needed for the activity:

Depends on the scope of the topic and the number of students in the class and whether students will look up the information during the class or before the class as a home work. But generally the activity is designed to be done in one class lesson (45 min). For more complex topics two class lessons should be allocated for the activity.

With small or if dedicated on only on one concrete and specific topic and 1-2 actor it could be done in less time (20-30 min).

For more complicated topics, if you want/need to cover whole activity in one lesson (45 min), it would be recommended to assign the topic in advance (steps I to II) and let students assess the role of actors and their perspectives as preparation for the class (homework) (step II and IV). In the class you will then discuss about the topic (step V and further).






If the time and scope of the topic allows you can also combine with Activity 1 and/or Activity 3 into one lesson (so to follow the Activity 1 by activity 2 and/or 3 during one class).



Before you start

Before you start you need to pick a relevant theme/topic/issue to be explored. Best is to continue with the topic already opened in the Activity 1.

Otherwise. How to choose the topic (problem definition) and the biases:

-  Beware of the problem definition not to limit the further research (exploration) by the students (see Module 0, chapter 1.3).
-  Be self-critical not to define the topic/problem influenced by your own biases.
-  Be self-critical and open to different point of views.
-  Do not worry about potentially controversial topics, there is no need to come to definitive conclusions during this activity. “Controversial topic” drive interesting discussion and then designing relevant research for Activity 3.
-  Topics that need further exploration of the data and information will be further explored during the Activity 3 Designing own research.
 - The Activity 2a should very well serve as basis for defining relevant research to find relevant evidence for the concerned points of view and considering the participating actors

Materials needed for the activity

You can approach the task in two ways (or combine these):

- a) You let students to explore and find the sources of information by their own.
- b) You will point out selected sources of information about the topic to the students. So the students will start with these selected sources/actors.

To decide what approach to choose might be directed by these criteria:

- i. If you know the topic and/or know about “interesting” (example) sources that can demonstrate differing perspectives about the issue than you can assign the students to look at these sources.
- ii. If there is not enough time to spend in the class for this activity it would be better to pick some sources for the students to safe time.
- iii. If students get the assignment of the activity (to identify the actors) before the lesson as a home work, you can leave space to students to find they own sources. Then you may ask them to send you the sources before the class so you can get more familiar with the sources in advance.



ACTIVITY PLAN

Motivate students:

- That if they want to understand about something or want to persuade (argue) someone about something they should understand the opposing perspectives to have relevant arguments
- That they will be looking for themselves about the topic instead you giving them the information first hand.
- By picking up some actually relevant topic or by letting them to pick an issue they want to work on.

- I. **The topic – issue concerned (topic selection).** Follow to explore the topic selected in Activity 1. If you start with Activity 2 (see above) select the topic (issue) that will be explored (see the Module 0 for details) yourself or let students choose proceed similar as described in Activity 1.

For the Activity 2a it is expected to work with topic where the students are not direct participants of the issue and cannot directly communicate and “influence” the involved actors. If the issue concerned some local or school activity involving direct interaction with the actors follow the Activity2b:

- a. *(discussion)* Let students decide about specific topic(s) they will be working on. The theme of the **topic should be focused**, we recommend to choose some actual urgent societal issue like deforestation of Amazonian forest, war in Ukraine, climate change or some topic in the range of the class like historical event from some specific period etc.
 - Let the students explain why they choose this topic (personal interest, actuality etc. Do not go to details, see step II).
 - b. *(assignment)* OR You choose the topic according the subject of class or some specific issue you would like students to work on. (see above Before you start)
 - i. Briefly explain the topic (do not go to details about possible controversies and different points of views) and go to the next step.
- II. **poss. First impression. (short discussion) Relevant when starting with Activity 2a before Activity 1.** First impression about the topic from the students can be obtained by short discussion session after the assignment of the topic.
- a. Ask students:
 - Q: *What do you know about this issue XXX?*
 - Q: *What do you think about this issue XXX?*
 - i. The purpose is for teachers to get the general understanding how students perceive the topic and what they know about it.
 - b. If you let students pick their own theme, this should be asked when choosing the topic in step I
 - c. Do not go into details (do not let student argue about the issue etc.).
 - i. If controversial topic, tell students that it will be interesting to explore and discuss the issue further.
 - d. Write down for yourself the first impression formulated by students to remember: use **template for teachers 2a-III First impression**



- e. Continuously follow the discussion with students by step III.
- III. **Actors their roles and perceived perspectives – first impression.** (*assignment/discussion*) First identify the relevant actors involved and their differing perspectives perceived by students (based on the first impressions/opinions/information the students have) by discussion in class after the assignment of the topic or following the Activity 1:
- a. **Depending on the scope and familiarity of the issue concerned.** You can start with *assignment* to students so they look up the information about the issue and relevant actors first OR if the topic is familiar it would be possible to start right away with *discussion*:
 - b. **Assignment:** give students time in the class or as a home assignment to prepare for the class to look up information about the issue concerned and to identify relevant actors and their role and perspective about the issue. The assignment can cover the step III and IV. For the assignment let students use the templates:
 - i. **A2a-III Identify actors and their primary perspective about the issue perceived by students (first impression)**
 - ii. **A2a-IV Type of roles and the actors**
 - c. **Discussion:** Discuss in the class what actors are involved and their role and perspective:
Ask students:
Q: What actors are involved in the issue?
 - i. Let students identify the actors by themselves, if they omit someone let in this stage be and do not remind them.
Q: What type of actor is it (government, NGO, expert, news organization, university...)?
Q: Why is this actor important? What is his/her role in the issue?
 - ii. Let students identify the (type of) roles by themselves.
Q: What is the individual actors' main perspective about the issue?
 - iii. In this stage the perspective of the actor should be identified based on the first students' findings or impressions
 - need not to go deep and to have it supported by evidence (this will come later).
 - basically it is about **collecting the first impressions/opinions of the students about the actors**
 - if the students could not agree about the perspective let it be as it is with comment that there is disagreement and that it will be explored later on
 - the perspectives of the actors might be by students even wrongly identified as their own (students') opinion about the actors
 - iv. Use the template (assign someone from the class to write it down or do it your self, but should be accessible to all in the class): **A2a-III Identify actors and their primary perspective about the issue perceived by students (first impression)**
- IV. **Different roles of actors.** (*discussion*) The role of actors by students will be explored into more depth.
- a. (*discussion*) Try to generalize with the students through class discussion the different roles the involved actor might have.



Q: *What types of roles does the actors have? What types of roles there are?*

- i. first let students define the roles and then help to organize the roles into functional categories: *decision making, setting the rules, action, expert/opinion maker, influenced by, influencing decisions...*)

Q: *How is the role of the actor perceived by other actors?*

- ii. first let students say and then intervene/help them
 - are the actors: cooperating / arguing - have opposing opinions arguments / different-opposing interests
 - different roles might also lead to different position of the actor to others (as setting up binding rules in case of government authority etc.)

Q: Did not we forget anyone who is influencing or is influenced in the issue concerned?

- iii. let students first identify if they did not forget anyone (might be a target group without influence etc.)
 - discuss with student why they think they forget this actor before
- iv. Use the template: [A2a-IV Type of roles and the actors](#)

V. **Different perspectives.** (*discussion*) The perceived perspectives of actors by students will be explored into more depth.

- i. Explain students that you will explore into more depth the perspectives of the actors
- a. (*discussion*) Go actor by actor identified in previous steps and examine why and on what the students based their opinion about perspective of the actor (depending on time you can choose only selected actors):

Ask students:

Q: *First ask/investigate whether it is really perspective of the actor or an opinion/judgement about the actor by students.*

Q: *On what did you based your opinion about the actor's perspective?*

- ii. evidence or opinion
 - Remember, opinion is not a bad thing as far as we know that it is an opinion and not a fact
- iii. is the information provided by the actor themselves or from other source
 - trustworthiness of the source (remember to students what was learned about fact-checking in the Activity 1)
 - distinguish possible proclamation about self and real intentions and motivations
 - understand that even biased information or disinformation is a valuable source of information when exploring differing perspectives (of course when we can see that and how the information is biased/disinformative)
 - remember about lateral reading

Q: *Further investigate. What is declared perspective/goal/motivation of the actor and what is the (potential/arguably/proved) real intention of the actor?*

How the actor what to be seen perceived? What are their real motivations?

- iv. To reveal underlining factors and deepen understanding about the actors.



- How is actually the actor **framing (presenting)** the issue?
 - What is the **world view/stand point** of the actor about the concerned issue?
 - What is the **motivation** of the actor?
 - Be careful not do not become “paranoid” to see some profit gaining motives everywhere as “he/she is doing it for the money...” (many people are doing it because they believe in it)
 - But of course it is important to see conflicts of interests
 - What the actor likes/dislikes – favor/unfavor (**attitude**)?
 - Can investigate **the actions and methods** the actors using to achieve his/her objective.
 - What set of **norms and believes or habits** does the actors have (base their perspective on)?
 - v. Discussion between students (declared vs real)
 - Let students discuss the issue and show their perspective
 - During the discussion look up for possible biases students have (to be used in the next step)
 - By careful to identify even biases towards opinion we might all share as right (if we look to confirm this it is still a bias even we might “be right”)
 - vi. Discussion based on the students opinions and evidence they provide
 - if evidence is missing or would take much time to explore it explain that this have to be investigated more in the future by finding relevant evidence (in the Activity 4)
 - vii. Use the template: **A2a-V Perspectives of the actors**
 - b. (*discussion*) Discuss and summarize with students what opinions about perspectives of actors they had at the beginning and what changed or get more cleared (roles of actors, their declared and really expected perspectives). Point out what different opinions between students were and remained (and that it will be further explored). Possibly point out how hard is it to just agree about perspectives of others. Possibly point out if the perspective of the actor was describes as opinion about the actor.
 - viii. If you want to give an opinion or resolve some different opinions in the class provide evidence
 - If evidence is missing or would take much time to explore it explain that this have to be investigated more in the future by finding relevant evidence (in the Activity 4)
- VI. **Biases.** (*discussion*) Identify the biases behind our assessment (judgement) of the perspectives of the actors involved. And identify possible biases of the actors.
- i. This step is actually more about **trying to understand why I (the student) perceive the actor as I did.**
 - What do I base my opinion/perception?
 - Does it cover the whole picture?



- It is more about to understand about how we perceive things than to obtain detailed analysis about the actors as this might require more research designed and interpreted id Activity 3 and 4.
- a. *(discussion)* Discuss with students and explain them about biases. Start with asking them whether they know what biases are. Ask them if they could identify any biased opinions by classmates in previous discussion. Identify biases of the actors. And then give them some background by yourself.
Q: Do you know what biased decision is? Do you know some biases, can you name some?

Biases made by students and biases by the examined actors:

Q: Can you point out some biased arguments/opinions about the actors perspectives in the previous discussion in the class (biases made by student in the class)?
and

Q: Can you point out some biased opinions that the actors have about the issue?

- ii. You can start to assess the biases of the actors or biases that the students made (see the question above). Depending on the topic – where were the biases more obvious (see below the biases to talk about).
- iii. Make sure to create open atmosphere where everyone is accepted and not making fun of. Show students that we are all prone to be biased and that we are all influenced by our experiences and our environment. And that it is actually quite hard to see our biases (blind spot bias).
- iv. Depending on the knowledge about biases by students complement or correct the information about biases and present the relevant biases. You can go one bias by **time explain the bias and discuss with student** whether they have been a) biased by themselves in previous discussion b) what (potential) biases the actors will have towards the issue:

Q: Was the information used to form the opinion about the perspective of other actors reliable and relevant?

- **Anchoring bias**

- *Q: Did not we asses (judged) the perspectives of the actors based on be influenced by pre-existing information or the first piece of information?*

- **Availability bias**

- *Q: Was not our assessment of the actors based on the information that is readily available to us?*
- *Q: Were we aware that we had limited information?*
- This bias might be very well connected with **social bubble** and **information gap** phenomena, so you can pint this out to students (see chapter 1.7 in Module 2)

- **Representativeness bias**

- *Q: Did not we asses (judged) the perspectives of the actors based on the quantity of information rather than on the quality of the evidence?*
- *...connection with the availability bias*



Q: How were our position influenced when assessing the perspectives of the actors?

– **Confirmation Bias**

- Q: Did not we asses (judged) the perspectives of the actors influenced by our own opinion?
- Q: Did we clearly identified the perspectives of the actors or more likely presented our opinion about the actors?
- Q: Could you by opinion formulated by students (XXX) about the actors identify opinion of the student itself?

– **Projection bias**

- Q: Did not we asses (judged) the perspectives of the actors based on our own projection (based on how we see the world thinking that everyone sees the things the same way)?

– **Fundamental attribution error**

- Q: Did not we project our attitudes toward the person to explain his/her action/opinion instead to see the whole context of the situation?
- Q: Did we recognized how the context influences the behavior/opinion of others? Did we consider/recognized the situation the actor is in?

Q: Were we able to see also our own biases or only the biases of others?

– **Blind spot bias**

- we recognize biases in others but fail to see them in your selves

- v. Use the template: **A2a-VIIa Biases (actors)** and **A2b-VIIa Biases (in the class made by students)**

Following activities in the class to be considered/done

As this is still starting activity where the topic is still not fully explored it is ok to end the activity with some unknowns. This is actually also very important step to learn to say that:

“I (we) do not know (yet)”

“All the information is shoving this but we should explore it more”

Depending on the topic selected and overall schedule for the activities planned by teacher the Activity 2 should be followed by **Activity 3 Designing own research**. In the research the different perspectives and actors will be taken into account to look for relevant evidence to support or dismiss them.

If you do NOT need further research to collect relevant evidence (you have all the necessary data and information available) it is also possible to go directly to Activity 4 and skip research phase in Activity 3.

You can also combine Activity 2 with Activity 1 or 3 into one lesson (so to follow the Activity 1 by activity 2 and/or 3 during one class).

See the **Logic of the Activities** that are part of the Activity Toolkit at the beginning of the document.