

Manifesto on High Quality History, Heritage and Citizenship Education

15 Principles for the recognition of the distinctive contribution of history to the development of young people

Preventing the Misuses of the Past

Complexity – Multiperspectivity – Critical Thinking

Principle 1

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education does not attempt to transmit a single truth about the past. However it aims to approach the historical truth as near as possible based on solid facts and qualified evidence and by striving towards objectivity. It creates an understanding that historical narratives are multi layered and interpretations, and it stimulates the willingness to question these narratives and think critically.

Principle 2

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education deconstructs historical myths and stereotypes by putting the traditional ‘mirror of pride and pain’ into perspective, thereby supporting educators and students to question their own logic and cultural idioms. This traditional pattern is created around the suffering of the nation on one hand and the national pride on the other hand, neglecting to tell about the harm done to others and the histories of those areas which did not connect to the nation’s narratives.

Principle 3

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education raises awareness on the fact that the past is perceived differently according to a person’s social, generational and sexual background as well as belonging to ethnic, linguistic and religious communities, and diverging world-views in society. It encourages an acceptance that people and events must be appraised in the context of their values and time.

Principle 4

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education addresses sensitive and controversial topics in history in a responsible way to undermine the impact of one-sided, biased, and politicised views of the past and to bring into being its complex and multidimensional nature. This implies avoiding emotive, subjective and hostile language and promoting the use of impartial concepts, without nevertheless white-washing and sanitising problematic historical narratives to get a rosy picture of the past.

Principle 5

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education promotes long-term reconciliation in divided societies by developing empathy skills and the ability to disagree about interpretations of the past without resorting to hatred and violence.

Promoting an Inclusive Approach to the Study of the Past

Diversity – Dialogue - Equality

Principle 6

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education recognises that its significance is related to current experiences and challenges and therefore aims to help students understanding the world they live in and to support their orientation for the future. This means in particular the conviction that the study of the past is instrumental in the development of political and civic awareness, thus bridging history and citizenship as two school subjects that are mutually relevant.

Principle 7

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education introduces global perspectives and encompasses the multiple dimensions of the study of the past - political, social, economic, cultural and environmental. It includes the study of key events but also long-term developments and addresses major themes such as everyday life, nature, gender, human rights and migration.

Principle 8

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education addresses a manifold of human values, beliefs, attitudes and dispositions, such as democracy, tolerance, respect for human rights, mutual understanding, social cohesion, solidarity, freedom, courage, equal opportunities, and responsibility, but also love and friendship. However, it also tackles negative concepts such as stereotyping, prejudice, bias, xenophobia, racism, violence and hate, because they are also part of the spectrum of human behaviours and need to be reflected upon.

Principle 9

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education embraces cultural, religious and linguistic diversity as a way to foster social cohesion and inclusion and contribute to intercultural and interreligious dialogue

Principle 10

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education uses the “history around us” as a powerful way to convey a vivid understanding of the past, and embraces heritage as a unique access to this past through its tangible and intangible legacies.

Principle 11

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education is based on competences, including cognitive (knowledge), functional (application of knowledge), personal (behaviour) and ethical (principles guiding behaviour) components. This implies giving equal importance to the acquisition of context-appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes, beliefs, dispositions and values.

Principle 12

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education contributes to develop key competences¹ such as social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression, learning to learn, digital competence, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. It also gives transversal competences such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and decision taking.

Principle 13

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education develops fundamental thinking skills and concepts: chronological understanding, historical significance, primary source evidence, interpretation, cause and consequence, change and continuity, comparison and contrast, empathy, fact and opinion, bias and objectivity. It also addresses substantive concepts such as slavery, constitution, socialism or depression.

Principle 14

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education develops the ability to understand and analyze issues and events; the ability for gathering, organising, investigating and assessing sources in a logical and coherent way, leading to conclusions and generating ideas. It also helps acquire a talent for clear expression by putting forward ideas and arguments in a concise manner.

Principle 15

High quality history, heritage and citizenship education includes pedagogical and assessment strategies that enhance independent learning, motivation and engagement, foster a sense of responsibility, a passion for active involvement, an urge to take initiative, and stimulate communication and cooperation. It emphasises the development of curiosity, autonomy, open- and international mindedness, a spirit of inquiry and the abilities to think independently and to resist manipulation.

¹ Defined in the European Reference Framework of 2006 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf