

Theoretical background

Project-based learning – Fostering principles of democracy in classroom teaching

To master the complex challenges of the 21st century, students need a variety of personal skills and competencies. The identification and implementation of these 21st Century Skills started in the United States and spread through international organizations such as the OECD. These 21st Century Skills are the 4C's: Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication and Collaboration. Democratic education and project-based learning provide these 21st Century Skills.



Figure 1: 4C's: *Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication and Collaboration* (Quelle: <https://karlhosang.de/21st-century-skills/>)

Democratic education and project-based learning have a close connection, which was developed more than one hundred years ago in the USA as a concept of reform education (Knoll, 1993). Democratic education aims to familiarize students with the values and principles of democracy and to prepare them for their role as active and responsible citizens. It provides the 21st Century Skills, abilities, and knowledge that students need to participate in democratic processes and decision-making. Project-based learning is a sub-form of action-based learning and is characterized by student orientation, reality orientation and product orientation (Knoll, 2006).

Democratic education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active participation • experience with group dynamics - dealing with emotions • experience of self-perception and perception of others • possibility of self-determination • increasing responsibility and commitment • fostering of cooperation, communication, self-organization, time management, ability to deal with conflicts • understanding of contexts • analysis of a complex issue • promotion of digital skills 	Project-based learning
-----------------------------	---	-------------------------------

Figure 2: Skills and knowledge

In project-based learning, students should apply these skills and knowledge. They discover and experiment - aesthetically, athletically, scientifically, culturally and socially. According to Gerald Hüther, a German neurobiologist, "Children need repeated opportunities to experience something that gets under their skin, that touches and excites them" (Hüther, 2008). Students expand their knowledge, apply knowledge and skills through independent work and teamwork on real projects, grapple with a problem, make decisions, argue, and reflect - according to Max Frisch's motto "Democracy means people getting involved in their own affairs. School overcomes its isolation from the living world of children and young people. In this way, learning processes are based less on "aseptic" teaching units. They can be experienced in real life. Solving conflicts, learning to listen, coping with failure and accepting other opinions can have a positive effect - on both - the students' and the teachers' side.

Bibliography

Drumm, J. (2007). *Methodische Elemente des Unterrichts: Sozialformen, Aktionsformen, Medien*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Hosang, K. (2020). 21st Century skills. Kompetenzen für das 21. Jahrhundert. Abgerufen unter: <https://karlhosang.de/21st-century-skills/>

Hüther, G., Roth, W., von Brück (Eds.), M., *Damit das Denken Sinn bekommt*, Freiburg 2008.

Knoll, M. (2006). Projektmethode. In: Arnold, K. u.a. (Eds). *Handbuch Unterricht*. Bad Heilbrunn, 2006, S.270 – 275.

Knoll, M. (1993). 300 Jahre lernen am Projekt. In: *Pädagogik* 45 (7-8), 58-63.

Meyer, H. (1987). *Unterrichtsmethode II: Praxisband*. Cornelsen.

These resources have been created within the Erasmus+ project *LabSchoolsEurope: Participatory Research for Democratic Education*. You are welcome to use, adapt and transform these materials and share them using the same license as the original Creative Commons License **CC-BY-SA** 4.0.



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The creation of these resources has been (partially) funded by the ERASMUS+ grant program of the European Union under grant no. 2019-1-DE01-KA203-005003.

Neither the European Commission nor the project's national funding agency, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) are responsible for the content or liable for any losses or damage resulting of the use of these resources.