

# CRITICAL CHANGE LAB

## Deliverable D1.1

Instrument: Democracy Health  
Questionnaire (DHQ) and Democracy Health Index (DHI)



Funded by  
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Authors	Boris Jokić, Jelena Matić Bojić, Zrinka Ristić Dedić, Nikola Baketa (ISRZ)
Contributors	
Acknowledgments	Team members from TCD, UB, OULU and KERSNIKOVA





Reviewers

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(ALTEREURO)





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## Glossary

ALTEREURO	Alternatives Europeennes Association
Critical Changelab	Democracy meets arts: Critical change labs for building democratic cultures through creative and narrative practices
D	Deliverable
DHI	Democracy Health Index
DHQ	Democracy Health Questionnaire
ISRZ	Institute for Social Research in Zagreb
KERSNIKOVA	Zavod za kulturo, umetnost in izobrazevanje Kersnikova
T	Task
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TT	Stichtung the tactical technology collective
UB	Universitat de Barcelona
UOULU	Oulun Yliopisto
WP	Work Package





## Executive Summary

Critical ChangeLab (Democracy Meets Arts: Critical Change Labs for Building Democratic Cultures through Creative and Narrative Practices) is a Horizon Europe research and innovation project addressing democratic erosion trends by strengthening youth participation in society. The project is carried out by 10 partner institutions and examines the current state of democracy in learning environments across Europe, generating a robust evidence base for the design of a participatory democratic curriculum. Critical ChangeLab develops a model of democratic pedagogy using creative and narrative practices to foster youth's active democratic citizenship at a time when polarisation and dwindling trust in democracy are spreading across Europe. At the Critical ChangeLabs, diverse actors from formal and non-formal education and civic organisations work together with youth to rethink European democracy and envision futures that are justice-oriented.

This deliverable stems from work on *T1.1 Assessing education institutions' democracy health*. It describes the development of Democracy Health Questionnaire (DHQ) and Democracy Health Index (DHI) through stages of conceptualisation, item development and piloting. The final versions of DHQ will be used in assessing democracy health of 2000 schools and institutions providing non-formal educational programmes across ten partner countries.







# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 About Critical ChangeLab

Critical ChangeLab (Democracy Meets Arts: Critical Change Labs for Building Democratic Cultures through Creative and Narrative Practices) is a Horizon Europe research and innovation project addressing democratic erosion trends by strengthening youth participation in society. The project is carried out by 10 partner institutions and embraces a transdisciplinary approach combining expertise from Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, as well as Science and Technology.

Specifically, Critical ChangeLab develops a model of democratic pedagogy using creative and narrative practices to foster youth's active democratic citizenship at a time when polarisation and dwindling trust in democracy are spreading across Europe. The Critical ChangeLab Model for Democratic Pedagogy fosters learners' transformative agency and strengthens democratic processes in education through collaborations across formal and non-formal education and local actors around global/local challenges relevant for youth. The Model promotes creative and narrative practices to explore the historical roots of local and EU-wide challenges, understanding the value-systems and worldviews underlying distinct types of relations (human-human, human-nature, human-technology). At the Critical ChangeLab, young people are introduced to approaches such as theatre of the oppressed, transmedia storytelling, as well as speculative and critical design to rethink European democracy and envision democracy futures that are justice-oriented.

Throughout the project lifespan, Critical ChangeLab:

- examines the current state of democracy within educational institutions identifying youth's perspectives on everyday democracy;
- designs a scalable and tailorable model of democratic pedagogy in formal and non-formal learning environments;
- co-creates and implements the model with youth and stakeholders, evaluating the model generating recommendations for policy and practice, and developing strategies to sustain the model and its outcomes overtime.

Critical ChangeLab combines in-depth quantitative and qualitative research on democracy and youth with participatory action research cycles to generate a robust





evidence base to support democratic curriculum development using participatory, creative and critical approaches.

## 1.2 Map & Design in the Critical ChangeLab project

D1.1 is part of Work Package 1 (WPI) *Map & Design*, which provides the ground for Work Packages 2 and 3. The main goal of the WPI is mapping practices and perceptions regarding everyday democracy in educational institutions and amongst youth and designing a model for democratic pedagogy.

D1.1 is linked to the following WPI objectives:

- Advance knowledge on the current state of democratic practices in formal and non-formal learning environments within Europe
- Assess democracy cultures in various learning environments, improving institutions' and organisations' capacity for self-assessing and identifying opportunities for promoting democracy values

In order to achieve these objectives Democracy Health Questionnaire (DHQ) and Democracy Health Index (DHI) were developed as deliverable within T1.1.

To include multiple perspectives, ensure cross-national appropriateness, enable coordination between related tasks (e.g. T1.1 and T1.3) and maximise the quality of the D1.1, ISRZ as the T1.1 task leader invited other partners to contribute to the development of the DHQ and DHI. Research partners (UB, UOULU and TCD), as well as Kersnikova, readily accepted the invitation. The partners agreed to the suggested mode of work – regular weekly or bi-weekly online meetings, with tasks to be completed in between the meetings. Open discussion and exchange of different viewpoints of all members was encouraged. In the period between 24th of April of 2023., when the first online meeting was held, to September of 2023. thirteen online meetings were organised.





## 2 The Democracy Health Questionnaire

DHQ is envisaged as a self-assessment tool that both schools and institutions providing non-formal educational programmes can use in order to estimate current state of their democracy health and plan future activities to improve this important organisational characteristic. Although in the initial stage, targeted towards heads of institutions or those in charge of educational services, recommendation is that DHQ is discussed between staff members of educational institution. This guideline is important in order to include diverse views and encourage participation of different levels of employed in institutional development. Its items can serve as a fertile ground for reflection on institutions' democratic culture. Furthermore, comparison of institution's DHI to national and European averages represents a solid benchmark for future steps at institutional level.

### 2.1. Stages of development of DHQ

The development of DHQ involves five stages (Figure 1.) - conceptualisation, development, piloting, implementation, and reporting. Thus far, the first three stages of the DHQ development and refinement have been finalised. Work in these stages led to the Deliverable 1.1. - *Instrument: Democracy Health Questionnaire and Index*.

This deliverable will be followed by an extensive research stage of DHQ implementation and data collection. Final stage includes analyses and reporting of the results and refinement of DHI based on the empirical data.

A detailed descriptions of the first three stages of DHQ development are provided in the next sections.





## STAGES

D1.1 Instrument: Democracy Health Questionnaire and Index

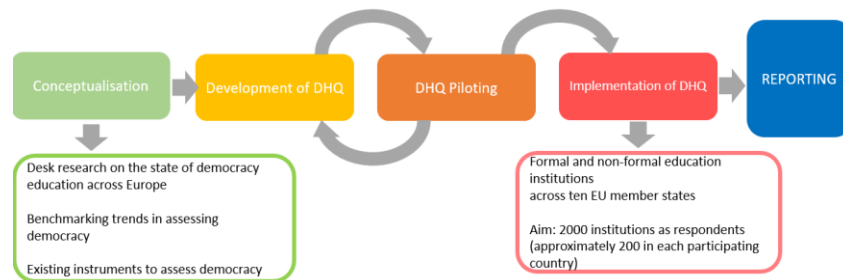


Figure 1. Stages of DHQ development

## 2.2. Conceptualisation

The conceptualisation of the DHQ consisted of desk research on the state of democracy education across Europe, benchmarking trends in assessing democracy within educational institutions and reviewing existing instruments used to assess democracy within educational institutions (Figure 2.).

## STAGES

D1.1 Instrument: Democracy Health Questionnaire and Index

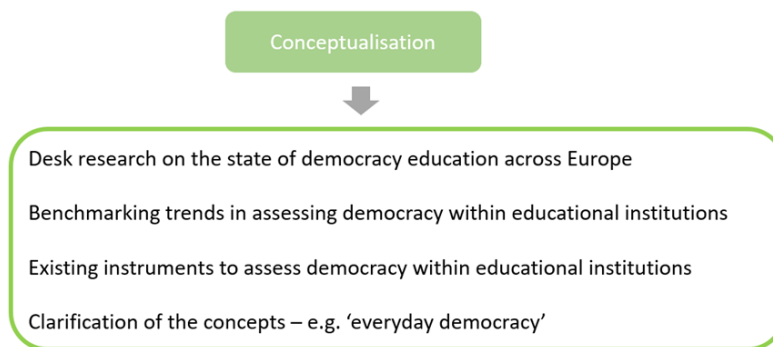


Figure 2. Conceptualisation of the DHQ

Four research partners (ISRZ, UOULU, UB and TCD) participated in the process of DHQ conceptualisation. Initially, the partners reached a common understanding of main concepts relevant for the development of the DHQ. The aim was to develop a questionnaire that educational institutions will use as a self-assessment tool allowing them to both understand levels of their current democratic practices and initiate planning to increase democracy health of their institutions.





The decisions were made to focus on:

- both schools and institutions providing wide range of non-formal educational programmes to youth aged 11 to 18,
- in the Critical ChangeLab project heads of institutions or individuals in charge of educational services will be asked to complete questionnaire. In order to avoid single (top-down) perspective in future use institutions will be encouraged to use DHQ in a collective setting,
- data collection will be completely anonymised,
- development of items with adequate characteristics to addressing existing diversity of institutions, educational programmes and various European contexts.

The partners agreed on initial tasks regarding the conceptualisation of the DHQ:

- ISRZ provided a review of existing instruments, scales and protocols used to assess democracy within educational institutions.
- OULU provided a review of literature on everyday democracy.
- UB provided literature review on participation of youth in formal and non-formal educational environments.
- TCD provided literature review on citizenship education in formal and non-formal educational environments.

Reports provided by partners served as a starting point for the further development of DHQ. Based on the literature reviews and through iterative consultations with the partners involved in T1.1, a decision was made to develop an original instrument for self-assessment of democracy health of educational institutions. The rationale for this decision was an absence of such instrument that educational institutions can use for their purposes.





## 2.3. Development of DHQ

Steps in development of DHQ are presented in Figure 3.

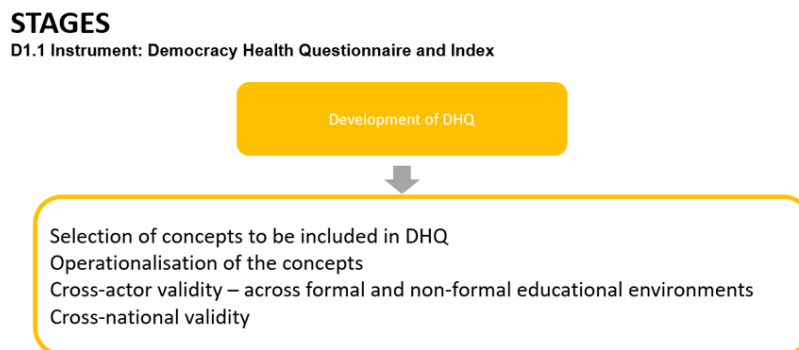


Figure3. Development of DHQ stage

During the process of item development, involved partners consulted the contents of the existing instruments, scales and protocols used to assess aspects of democratic functioning within educational institutions (e.g. Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Köhler, Weber, Brese, Schulz & Carstens, 2018; Scheerens, 2011; Skidmore & Bound, 2008). This consultation served as a starting point for the formulation of DHQ items that would meet the criteria for both cross-national and cross-actor (formal-non-formal; institutional profiles...) validity.

For the comparability reasons, DHQ is designed to include items that are meaningful for educational institutions across consortium countries (and wider), regardless of their national context specificities.

Two versions of DHQ are developed, one for schools and one for institutions providing non-formal educational programmes. These two versions are comparable regarding all conceptual elements at the same time integrating specifics of educational services within formal and non-formal educational environments. Main difference is in the elaboration and understanding of the term 'educational programme'. Whereas its meaning in the case of institutions providing non-formal educational programme(s) is self-explanatory, in the case of schools it demands elaboration. Within DHQ term 'school's educational programme' refers to activities that are planned in a specific school year. These activities may be informed by national, regional, local and/or school level curricular documents. School's educational programme encompasses all educational aspects of school life.





Two broad areas were defined to encompass institutions' democracy health or its democratic culture:

- democratic values
- democratic practices

These are conceptualised to be in reciprocal relationship, with democratic values of the institution influencing the implementation of institutional democratic practices, and with the use of democratic practices fostering the institutional democratic value orientation (Figure 4.).

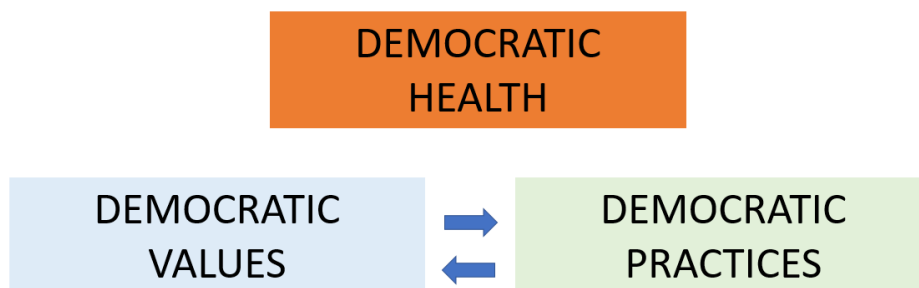


Figure 4. Broad areas indicating democracy health of an institution.

Through an iterative process of all partners involved in T1.1, the democratic values indicative of the democratic culture of an institution were agreed to be the following:

**PARTICIPATION** - Refers to the active involvement of students, staff, and other stakeholders in the programme development, learning process, and overall functioning of the institution. It goes beyond mere attendance and encompasses engagement, interaction, collaboration, and contribution within the educational community.

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY** - Ensures that the institution is responsible for its actions, decisions, and outcomes while maintaining an open and honest relationship with its internal and external stakeholders. It fosters openness and accessibility of information related to the functioning, decision-making processes, and performance of an educational institution.

**EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI)** - Presumes institutional dedication towards equal representation and opportunities, as well as respect and justice for students from various backgrounds, such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and abilities. Institutions





that value EDI foster a sense of belonging, seek diverse perspectives, and encourage engagement to maximise the potential of every individual.

**ECO-SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** - Refers to the ethical obligation and accountability the institution has towards the environment and society, recognising their interconnectedness and advocating for sustainable practices that minimise harm to both. Eco-social responsibility encourages actions that prioritise environmental conservation, social justice, and the wellbeing of the wider community, aiming for a more equitable and sustainable future.

Each of four values was then related to the set of items developed to reflect democratic practices within the four domains representing life-cycle of an educational programme.

The domains representing life-cycle of an educational programme are presented in Figure 5.

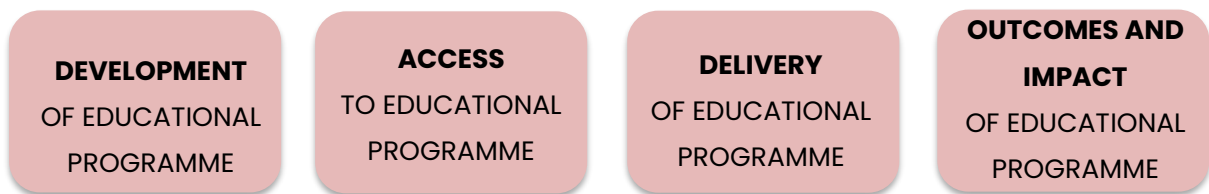


Figure 5. Domains representing life-cycle of an educational programme within an institution.

In line with self-assessment orientation, within DHQ participants are asked to estimate each democratic value and practice in their respective institutions on the following three dimensions:

DIMENSION	EXPLANATION
IMPORTANCE	<i>how important do you consider this practice/value?</i>
CURRENT LEVEL	<i>to what extent is this practice/value currently present in your school/educational programmes of your organisation?</i>
EXPECTATION IN 5 YEARS	<i>to what extent do you expect this practice/value will be present in your school/educational programmes of your organisation in 5 years?</i>







## 2.4. DHQ Piloting

Steps in development of DHQ are presented in Figure 6.

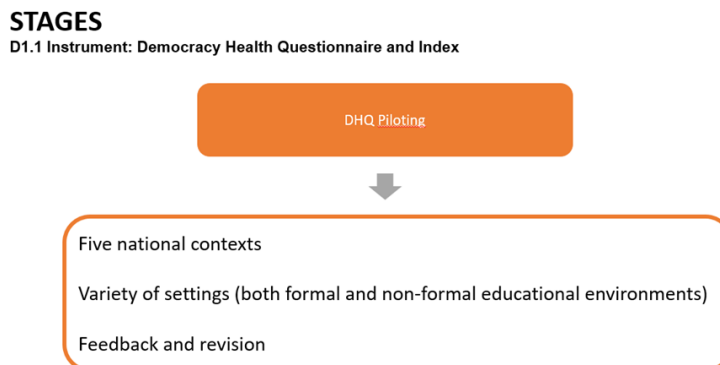


Figure 6. DHQ Piloting stage

The purpose of the piloting was to test the developed questionnaire and obtain participants' feedback for the improvement of DHQ. Four research partners (ISRZ, UOULU, UoB, and TCD) and partner organisation from Slovenia (KERSNIKOVA) conducted the piloting in their respective countries. It was envisaged that in each of the five countries a single school and a single institution providing non-formal educational programmes will participate in the piloting phase.

Questionnaires were provided to all partners through the online research platform Alchemer. Partners received instructions for conducting the piloting and were required to go through specific items related to the content and technical characteristics of the questionnaire to ensure quality feedback.

During the piloting, structured feedback was collected on the:

- time required to complete the questionnaire,
- fatigue of correspondents during completion,
- questionnaire flow,
- item clarity,
- relevance of the questions to the educational programmes offered by the institutions,
- other general feedback.

Piloting was conducted with 11 institutions exceeding the planned number – six schools and five institutions providing non-formal educational programmes.





- ISRZ - two schools and one institution providing non-formal educational programmes.
- UOULU - one school and one institution providing non-formal educational programmes.
- UB - one school and one institution providing non-formal educational programmes.
- TCD - two schools and institution providing non-formal educational programmes.
- KERSNIKOVA - one institution providing non-formal educational programmes.

The piloting resulted with feedback and Insight leading to specific changes related to the content, format and technical aspects of the DHQ. The ISRZ team addressed all comments on particular questions. All interventions were presented to partners and discussed with them at subsequent meetings. The partners agreed to remove certain items that proved unclear during the pilot implementation. Finally, for certain expressions, adaptation to the local context (adequate language) was allowed and noted in the final instructions delivered to all consortium partners.

Final output of work in T1.1 are two versions of the DHQ consensually agreed by partners - one for schools and one for institutions providing non-formal educational programmes. Unformatted versions are compared in the Appendix A. These parallel versions are developed in a manner allowing for the highest levels of comparison between schools and institutions providing non-formal educational services.

The questionnaire for schools (see Appendix B) has six questions related to general information about the specific school. This is followed with four sections related to the aforementioned domains:

- Development of educational programme - assessed with six items,
- Access to educational programme - assessed with three items,
- Delivery of educational programme - assessed with eleven items,
- Outcomes and impact of educational programme - assessed with six items.

The last section explores the democratic values within organisation through four items.

The questionnaire for institutions providing non-formal educational services (see Appendix C) has the same structure, with the only difference of having nine items related to general information about the institution.





Final versions of the DHQ can be accessed here:

*DHQ questionnaire for schools – English version*

<https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90617467/Critical-ChangeLab-Schools-Eng>

*DHQ questionnaire for institutions providing non-formal educational programmes –  
English version*

[https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90617466/Critical-ChangeLab-Educational-Institutions-  
Eng](https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90617466/Critical-ChangeLab-Educational-Institutions-Eng)





## 3 The Democracy Health Index

DHI is formulated on the basis of participants' estimations of democratic values and practices in educational programmes of their institutions. As stated, for each democratic value (4 items) and 4 domains of democratic practices (26 items) participants are asked to provide estimations on a scale from 0% (not at all) to 100% (very much) on the dimensions of:

- **Importance**
- **Current level**
- **Expectation in five years**

Based on their responses each educational institution will be provided with several parameters after the completion of self-assessment: *DHI*, *DHI - domain*, *DHI - profile*.

### **DHI**

DHI is calculated as a linear combination of all 30 items. For each item estimation of current state is weighed by the mean importance of specific item stemming from main research. For example for school X:

A.1. *Staff members are encouraged to propose ideas for the school's educational programme*

School's estimation of **current state x weight based on estimation of importance** from all schools participating in research

Values on each item for school X are added in order to constitute school's DHI.

### **DHI - domain**

DHI - domain provides organisations with the value of index on a specific domain of their educational programme(s). Based on the previous formula DHI is calculated specifically for development, access, delivery and outcomes and impact of educational programmes.

Both DHI and DHI-domain can be compared to the average values of DHI and DHI - domain of overall sample or national subsample of institutions participating in our project.





### DHI - profile

DHI profile provides institutions with the democracy health gap. Here participants are provided with visual profiling between their estimation of the current state and expectations regarding specific democratic values and practices in five years.

Profile provides a comparison between following estimates:

Estimation of current state x weight based on estimation of importance from all institutions participating in research

Expectation in five years x weight based on estimation of importance from all institutions participating in research

This comparison will allow each institution to identify gaps regarding their democratic health and should lead informed planning of actions for improvement.

In the following months, the implementation stage, which involves data collection, will take place. During the questionnaire development process, the partners agreed on the sample of institutions to which the questionnaires will be disseminated. Each of the ten partners in the project translated DHQ into national language and will be responsible for collecting data from 200 institutions in their respective countries. Results will inform possible modifications of DHQ and DHI.





## References

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Scheerens, J. (2011). Indicators on informal learning for active citizenship at school. *Educational assessment, evaluation and accountability*, 23, 201-222.

Skidmore, P., & Bound, K. (2008). *Everyday Democracy Index*. London: Demos.





# APPENDIX A

## DEMOCRACY HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE COMPARISON OF ITEMS: SCHOOLS QUESTIONNAIRE AND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

### DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

#### Dimensions and scale

<p>IMPORTANCE <i>How important do you consider this practice?</i></p> <p>CURRENT STATE <i>To what extent is this practice currently present in your school//in educational programmes of your organisation?</i></p> <p>EXPECTATION <i>To what extent do you expect this practice will be present in your school in 5 years //in educational programmes of your organisation in 5 years?</i></p>
<p>SCALE: 0% (not at all) - 50% (somewhat) - 100% (very much)</p>

### DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES - DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

SCHOOLS	EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES
A.1. Staff members are encouraged to propose ideas for the school's educational programme.	A.1. Staff members are encouraged to propose ideas for new educational programmes.
A.2. The school's educational programme is developed through open discussion and exchange of views between staff members.	A.2. Educational programmes are developed through open discussion and exchange of views between staff members.





A.3. The school's educational programme is developed to address the needs of diverse groups within the wider community.	A.3. Educational programmes are developed to address the needs of diverse groups within the wider community.
A.4. Responsibility for the natural and social environment is taken into account in the development of the school's educational programme.	A.4. Responsibility for the natural and social environment is taken into account in the development of educational programmes.
A.5. A variety of approaches and/or viewpoints are considered in the development of the school's educational programme.	A.5. A variety of approaches and/or viewpoints are considered in the development of educational programmes.
A.6. Decisions about the school's educational programme are collaborative.	A.6. Decisions about the educational programmes are collaborative.

## DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES – ACCESS TO THE SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

SCHOOLS	EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES
B.1. Individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds have equal opportunities to access the school's educational services.	B.1. Individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds have equal opportunities to access the educational programmes.
B.2. Ensuring access for students from diverse groups within the community is embedded in institutional policies and procedures.	B.2. Ensuring access to educational programmes for participants from diverse groups within the community is embedded in institutional policies and procedures.
B.3. Information about the school's educational programme and access criteria is easily accessible to all community members.	B.3. Information about educational programmes and access criteria is easily accessible to all community members.







**DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES – DELIVERY OF THE SCHOOL’S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES**

SCHOOLS	EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES
C.1. Students have the opportunity to influence the content of teaching and learning.	C.1. Participants have the opportunity to influence the content of educational programmes.
C.2. Students have the opportunity to influence the choice of teaching and learning methods.	C.2. Participants have the opportunity to influence the choice of teaching and learning methods used in educational programmes.
C.3. Teaching and learning are grounded in methods that encourage students’ active participation.	C.3. Educational programmes are based on teaching and learning methods that encourage active participation.
C.4. The teaching and learning environment encourages open discussion and the expression of diverse opinions.	C.4. The teaching and learning environment encourages open discussion and the expression of diverse opinions.
C.5. Individualised support is provided for students with additional educational needs.	C.5. Individualised support is provided for participants with additional educational needs.
C.6. Students are introduced to and encouraged to respect the diversities within their teaching and learning group(s).	C.6. In the educational programmes, participants are introduced to, and are encouraged to respect the diversities within the group.
C.7. All students, regardless of their attributes, have an equal opportunity to complete their education.	C.7. All participants, regardless of their attributes, have an equal opportunity to complete the educational programmes.
C.8. Students’ rights and responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated.	C.8. Participants’ rights and responsibilities within the educational programmes are clearly defined and communicated.
C.9. Clearly defined procedures exist in the case of a potential violation of either students’ or teachers’ rights.	C.9. Clearly defined procedures exist in the case of a potential violation of either participants’ or educators’ rights.
C.10. Conflicts that arise during teaching and learning are resolved in a constructive and inclusive manner.	C.10. Conflicts that arise during the course of the programme delivery are resolved in a constructive and inclusive manner.
C.11. Teaching and learning incorporates responsibility for the natural and social environment.	C.11. Programme delivery incorporates responsibility for the natural and social environment.





**DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES – OUTCOMES AND IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL’S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME**

SCHOOLS	EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES
D.1. Students’ evaluations and feedback are used to improve the school’s educational programme.	D.1. Participants’ evaluations and feedback are used to improve educational programmes.
D.2. Outcomes of the school's educational programme are shared and discussed with the wider community.	D.2. Outcomes of educational programmes are shared and discussed with the wider community.
D.3. Students develop competencies for active citizenship through the school's educational programme.	D.3. Participants develop competencies for active citizenship through educational programmes.
D.4. Evaluation of the school's educational programme considers multiple indicators.	D.4. Evaluation of educational programmes considers multiple indicators.
D.5. The impact of the school's educational programme on the wider community is evaluated.	D.5. The impact of educational programmes on the wider community is evaluated.
D.6. Sources of funding are publicly disclosed.	D.6. Sources of funding are publicly disclosed.





**ORGANISATIONAL VALUES**

**Dimensions and scale**

<p>IMPORTANCE <i>How important do you consider this value?</i></p> <p>CURRENT STATE <i>To what extent is this value currently present in your school// in educational programmes of your organisation?</i></p> <p>EXPECTATION <i>To what extent do you expect this value will be present in your school in 5 years// in educational programmes of your organisation in 5 years?</i></p>
<p>SCALE: 0% (not at all) - 50% (somewhat) - 100% (very much)</p>

**Items**

**SCHOOLS & EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES**

**1. PARTICIPATION**

refers to the active involvement of students, staff, and other stakeholders in the programme development, learning process, and overall functioning of the institution. It goes beyond mere attendance and encompasses engagement, interaction, collaboration, and contribution within the educational community.

**2. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

nsures that the institution is responsible for its actions, decisions, and outcomes while maintaining an open and honest relationship with its internal and external stakeholders. It fosters openness and accessibility of information related to the functioning, decision-making processes, and performance of an educational institution.

**3. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI)**

presumes institutional dedication towards equal representation and opportunities, as well as respect and justice for students from various backgrounds, such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and abilities. Institutions that value EDI foster a sense of belonging, seek diverse perspectives, and encourage engagement to maximise the potential of every individual.

**4. ECO-SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

refers to the ethical obligation and accountability the institution has towards the environment and society, recognising their interconnectedness and advocating for sustainable practices that minimise harm to both. Eco-social responsibility encourages actions that prioritise environmental conservation, social justice, and the wellbeing of the wider community, aiming for a more equitable and sustainable future.





## APPENDIX B

DHQ questionnaire for schools – multiple language versions

<https://zenodo.org/records/13767190>





## APPENDIX C

DHQ questionnaire for institutions providing non-formal educational programmes – multiple language versions

<https://zenodo.org/records/13767190>

