

**V4 SUMMER SCHOOL AS A NEW BRAND –  
GUIDE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING V4  
STUDIES  
(CURRICULUM PLANNING, TEACHING AND  
LEARNING METHODOLOGY AND ASSESSMENT)**

RICHÁRD IZMINDI

associate professor  
Budapest Metropolitan University  
rizmindi@metropolitan.hu

VILMOS VASS

professor  
Budapest Metropolitan University  
vvass@metropolitan.hu

**Abstract**

The context of the paper is introducing the historical evolution of V4 and main outcomes and results of the Education for Democratic citizenship project connected to the relationship between V4 Summer School as a new brand and Guide for learning and teaching V4 Studies. The purpose of the study is to introduce some results of the V4 project, the trends and processes of curriculum planning, teaching and learning methodology and assessment. This paper provides some important steps in the implementation of the V4 project in higher education from the international collaborative perspective, especially some pragmatic experience such as: making and using competency standards in curriculum development and changing learning and teaching mindset and give examples about the guided techniques and supporting system of the project.

**Keywords:** *V4, democratic citizenship, learning-based curriculum, collaborative learning, collaborative assessment culture*

## **The context**

### *Historical evolution of V4*

The former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, the three Central European countries entered negotiations at the beginning of the year 1990, its' main goal was free cooperation without dependence on the Russians. The relationship was on a voluntary basis and built on historical traditions.

Finally, József Antall – the first Hungarian prime minister after the regime change – invited the leaders of the other two countries, in Visegrád Castle. This castle was symbolic, because this town was the place of the first Visegrád-Congress between Hungary, Poland and Bohemia in 1335. On February 15, 1991, József Antall, Václav Havel Czechoslovakian President and Lech Wałęsa Polish President signed the famous Visegrad Declaration, officially establishing the Visegrad or V3 Group.

The first two years of the V3-cooperation were a very active period of initiatives and actions taken by the three countries. The first and one of the most important goals of the cooperation was to abolish the former Soviet system of cooperation. The Hungarian Prime Minister Antall played a major role in this on February 25, 1991 in Budapest, and further strengthened regional cooperation between the three countries.

V3 was a successful regional model for all the post-soviet block. The Visegrad countries became the first to sign the Europe Agreements. These three countries made the first step to reach the integration to the EU. One year later, at the end of 1992, the V3 countries established the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) too.

Although the number of members of the Visegrad Group increased with the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993 - it became this V4 - yet this new situation weakened cooperation between the countries. The main reason for this was the new political leaders of the newly state, Slovakia. Vladimír Mečiar Slovakian prime minister was a famous Russian Friend and the anti-Western oriented leader of the newly Visegrad state, Slovakia.

In 1998 there was a trilateral summit of Budapest. It was a turning point in the history of the Visegrad Group. Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland gathered to express their support for their cooperation after half decades. The first major joint achievement for the three major countries was the NATO accession in 1999. It was also the first big moment of the group's collaboration. Five years later the primary goal of Euro-Atlantic

cooperation completed, and all four Visegrad-countries were admitted into the European Union. It was another major turning point the summit of Stirina in June 2000, when the International Visegrad Fund was established. The main goal of the Visegrad Fund is to support cultural and scientific cooperation by cross-border scholarships etc. in the region.

The last ten years of the cooperation of the V4 can be described as the most important decade of regional cohesion. There are several reasons why cooperation between the four countries has become stronger over the past decade. On the one hand, ideologically closer parties lead these countries. On the other hand, the central European region faces more serious challenges, for example, international migration or covid-crisis. The common problems have brought the Visegrad-countries even closer in recent years, which will strengthen cooperation in the longer term.

V4 began to hold regular meetings in different formats larger groups of countries. There are many forms of regional cooperation in the European Union, and several formations of cooperation have developed in Central Europe either. Such formats were the 'V4+7' including Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia or the 'V4+EaP' with non-EU members of the Eastern Partnership or the 'V4 + Nordic and Baltic' countries. This process also led to the creation of *the Three Seas Initiative*, perhaps it will be an important regional group with the Visegrad-countries in its centre in the future.

Although the future of cooperation depends on the international political situation, changes in the world economy and the domestic political situation in each V4-country, it's expected to become an increasingly important force in Europe in historical terms. (Orbán, 2021)

#### *Education for Democratic citizenship*

In 1997, the Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) project was set up with the aim to find out which values and skills individuals require in order to become participating citizens, how they can acquire these skills and how they can learn to pass them on to others. (Birzea, 2000) The many activities carried out between 1997 and 2000, such as conferences, seminars, workshops. (Belanger, 2001; Forrester, 2000) The first EDC project (1997-2000) sought to explore the concepts and practice of education for democratic citizenship through research, conferences and supporting sites of citizenship. As a result of the success of this project a second project was launched in 2001 and will continue until 2004. Within this second project, policy development has been identified as the main

priority and there are currently a number of activities underway. The historical milestone of the two-phase project was the opening conference in Strasbourg in 1996. The aim of the conference (40 country representatives) was to make a common terminology, because of the experts and the practitioners used different concepts, for instance Citizenship Education, Civics, Civic Education, Human Rights Education etc. It has been resulted a Glossary, which contains the relevant key-concepts.

## **Citizen/Citizenship**

### *Citizenship Sites*

- Civil and Political Rights
- Cultural Rights
- Democracy/Democratic
- Diversity
- Economic and Social Rights
- Education for Democratic Citizenship
- Equality
- Human Rights (O'Shea, 2003)

This common terminology, defining basic concepts and core competencies can strengthen mutual understanding, effective collaboration, and discussion about the EDC from strategy to practice, which is based on values and experience. (Audigier, 2000) In the section of public education, the clear vision and tendency of Civic Education was a strong cross-curricular approach, which means, that every subject has significant parts for democratic citizenship. In fact, there is a strong consistency between cross-cultural approach and inter- multi- or transdisciplinary. (Vass, 1997) In practice, global problems (environment, demography, health, unemployment etc.) are relevant curricular topics in order to stress the above-mentioned between cross-cultural approaches and inter- multi- or transdisciplinary. (Audigier, 1996)

In 2005, the different versions of 'citizenship education' in formal curriculum emphasized civics, political education and social studies, or involved a variety of interdisciplinary combinations, including: history and civics; history, civics and economics; history and social studies; anthropology and social studies; religious and moral education; the study of man and ethics; civics and ethics; ethics, social sciences, geography and history (Bírzéa et al., 2005).

On the one hand, these global topics do not fit to one subject area, for instance history or geography, but on the other hand from the methodological point, these topics require collaborative learning, group work, inquiry-based learning and individual research. In the section of adult learning, the lifelong learning strategy came into prominence, which related to education for democratic citizenship and competency-based education. Firstly, the focus of this process is teaching democracy in citizenship. (See Figure 1)

*“Teaching about democracy should involve pupils in active experiences of democracy in the school and wider community and engage them in using their knowledge and understanding whilst acquiring and developing democratic skills.”<sup>1</sup>*

In these topics, obviously, there are some cross-curricular and extra-curricular topics, which are based on active learning, project-based work and problem-based learning as well. At the macro level, this is the triangle: internationalisation, creativity and transformation in higher education. (Smith-Vass, 2017) At the micro level, it is a complex transformative process in higher education, which requires strong coherency among curriculum planning, teaching and learning methodology and assessment. (Vass-Kiss, 2021) In fact, higher education is under the pressure to change all over the world. It has resulted in the competency based higher education, where the required coherency between changes and innovation focus on new meaning of learning and knowledge. As a result of new meaning of learning and lifelong learning strategy, higher education are growing demand for developing self-directed, active, meaningful and constructive learning. (Kiss-Vass, 2018)

---

<sup>1</sup> Teaching democracy in Citizenship - a summary. <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/teaching-democracy-citizenship-summary>



Figure 1. Teaching democracy in citizenship

### Why V4 Summer School?

Summer School is a significant part of effective competency development for democratic citizenship and extracurricular activities. Summer School gives opportunities to the teachers and students exchanging ideas and sharing experience among the V4 countries. It can strengthen mutual understanding, cooperation and collaborative learning. Summer School can create a pragmatic, innovative learning environment in a flexible way to stress 2x4C model and intercultural partnership. Because of the growing need to adapt to a fast changing world, the model of four-dimensional education contains knowledge, skills, character and meta-learning domains (Fadel, Bialik and Trilling, 2015) Focusing on the areas of competency, parallel to these structures, Jacob's 4C model emphasizes the growing

importance of creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, which have become a significant part of the new competency set (Jacobs, 2010; Vass, 2020) This is the first 4C model, called renewed basic skills model.

### **How V4 Summer School?**

In order to analyse how?, we need to turn back to the triangle coherence at the micro level, namely curriculum planning, teaching and learning methodology and assessment.

#### *Curriculum planning*

Turning to the main trends and processes of curriculum development, the original meaning of curriculum has changed from the 'plan for teaching' to the 'plan for learning'. From the paradigmatic perspective of curriculum theory, the emphasis has transferred from the teacher-and teaching-centred to the learner- and learning-centred paradigm. (Cullen–Harris–Hill 2012; Easton 2002; McCombs–Whisler 1997; Pinar–Irwin 2004; Pinar 2012; Schiro 2013). In the focus of a learner- and learning-centred paradigm, instead of selection and structurization of content or subject-matter knowledge, competences are coming to the fore. The main characteristics of a learner-centred approach for curriculum development is focusing on competences for lifelong learning, especially learning to learn and problem solving via individual, differentiated learning paths. In this context, another recent trend in curriculum development is a competency-based curriculum approach, where the focus is on planning transversal competences (critical, creative and innovative thinking, communication, collaboration, global citizenship, physical and psychological health) as horizontal points.

In summary, changing the culture of curriculum development in teacher education has some significant differences when compared to the traditional way of curriculum planning. When summarizing these differences (see Figure 2), first we have to point out the vision of changing the culture of curriculum development interprets the curriculum as a process. Thinking of it as a developmental process is a key factor of this vision, which is based on an 'active model of the individual'. (Kelly, 1999) This developmental model prioritizes competences and learning strategies. Parallel to this model, an output-based approach concentrates on learning outcomes. Learning outcomes focus on what the learner has achieved and what the learner can reach at the end of a learning activity. It is thus different from formulating aims and objectives or defining content.

<b>Traditional way of curriculum planning</b>	<b>Changing the culture of curriculum development</b>
curriculum as product	curriculum as process
individual planning	collaborative curriculum development
input (aims and objectives)	output (learning outcomes)
knowledge and content	competences
teaching methodology	learning strategies
summative assessment	diagnostic and formative assessment
teacher- and teaching-centred	learner- and learning-centred

Figure 2: Differences on traditional way of curriculum planning and changing the culture of curriculum development (Vass, 2020; Vass, 2018)

Assessment has more complex phenomena, with diagnostic and formative assessment functions having a more important role in curriculum development. Finally, from the point of cultural changes, collaborative curriculum development has an enormous impact on students' learning and organizational development.

Curriculum planning of V4 Summer school is based on these trends, especially a revised Bloom-taxonomy, expected learning outcomes, METU competency standards and professional competencies, interdisciplinary curricular content, students' and teachers' tasks, tools and assessment (diagnostic, formative and summative). The algorithm of planning is (i) defining the aims of the course focusing on learning outcomes and competency areas, (ii) short content description with key concepts and interdisciplinary approach, (iii) planning students' and teachers' activities, which are based on interaction and cooperative learning strengthening methodological culture and learn to learn competence, (iv) planning diagnostic, formative and summative assessment.

To sum, V4 Summer School curriculum development focuses on learning putting competencies and learning outcomes at the centre of planning. In order to reach these aims and expected outcomes promoting a V4 Summer School curriculum planning, learning and teaching methodology and assessment, we developed METU competency standards, namely

- Communication competency will be developed through individual and group work creating complex situations, so students can observe the function and operation of communication. They develop further



competence through new exercises set by themselves and practice presentation skills and collaborative assessment.

- Creative competency is based on divergent thinking by finding and solving a problem from different aspects and to combine apparently incompatible elements creating something new and valuable. During problem solving students are allowed to be open to different and multiple ideas and points of view.
- Complex problem solving means dealing with real life problems and tasks by involving external partners in the education. Problem solving progresses often in groups which requires cooperation with students and teachers via project-based courses.
- Critical thinking: Information gained through observation, thinking and communication will be analysed and synthesized in problem-based tasks. Through this way of critical thinking and debating, the students can be trained in their own experience, arguments and thoughts.
- Cooperation means working together in an effective way. The students bring their own ideas and interests to the project set together with the teacher to discuss the aims, expected outcomes and collaborative tasks. Social and civic competencies are significant in this process.
- Decision making will be developed through a large number of discussions, alternative tasks and different ways of thinking for potential solutions and by setting goals and defining the current conditions
- Digital competence means competent use of ICT tools with a high level of information processing, selection, construction and creative knowledge transfer.
- Self-knowledge and self-improvement can promote students to enhance their self-knowledge and to help in self-understanding. Through self-improvement the students can recognise their strengths and weaknesses by collecting evidence for their career portfolio. (Vass-Kiss, 2021)

### **Teaching and learning methodology**

V4 Summer School is based on active teaching and learning methodology in order to strengthen intrinsic motivation, such as group work, project work, collaborative and inquiry-based learning. The project-based research started making collaborative research plan.

## RESEARCH PLAN

Focused topic (Why is it so important to you and V4?)	
Research question (1)	
Problem description (2-3 sentences)	
Research methods	
Project and time management (sharing, collaboration-meetings, time schedule, deadlines)	
Expected outcomes	

Figure 3. Research plan form

Basically, the good topic is actual, relevant, research-based, interesting and complex. After the activity of focusing, the students need to formulate relevant research question. The good research question is opened, consistent with the topic and relevant to V4 topic. Problem description is based on problem sensitiveness. It requires some problem-based sentences to face the problems and dig deeper in the research analysing the research problem from the complex view. The “soul” of the research plan to define qualitative research methods, especially content and data analysis and online questionnaire. The other important element is to plan and manage the research with precise, operationalized milestones, deadlines and collaborative, communication forms. Finally, formulating expected outcomes is an out-put based thinking in order to see the main impact of the project.

## PROGRESS REPORT

What we did? (3-4 points or sentences)	
What we are going to do? (steps and deadlines)	
Risk factors	
Success criteria	

Figure 4. Progress Report form

Progress Report is an important tool during the process of research in order to follow the progression and reach required accountability of the project. Following the progression via results and feasible outcomes in order to face the risk factors and summarize the success criteria. The Progress Report can promote collaboration among the students and the teachers and strong consciousness. They use some cooperative learning methods, such as place mat, brainstorming and making mind map.

*Assessment of the project*

There are three functions of the assessment of the project, namely diagnostic, formative and summative. We use mainly diagnostic and formative assessment functions, such as mapping the prior knowledge, diagnose the competencies, using collaborative assessment culture discussing about the assessment criteria focusing on the presentations. The students took part at the preparatory workshop to discuss together about the Progress Report and the Assessment Criteria.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

<b>Content</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
relevancy					
coherency (Why?-How?- What?)					
informative					
<b>Presentation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
understand					
visualization					
creativity					
<b>Comment:</b>					

Figure 5: Assessment criteria form

## **Conclusion**

We achieved the planned results, especially summer school activities and publishing book with some relevant articles and publications. We satisfied with these outcomes, in the case of summer school the students got the preparatory workshop in order to present their project work in a scientific and creative ways. The students had strong intrinsic motivation and interests, they understood the evaluation criteria, especially the content and presentation parts, for instance relevancy, consistency, creativity etc. They collaborated effectively and work hard on the project to reach the overall goals of the summer school. In the case of the book, the planned publications can represent the international cooperation and the different process and results of the project. Basically, international cooperation has two levels. Firstly, the students worked together on the project, so the collaboration was successful during this process. Secondly, they work together with their national and international tutors representing collaborative professionalism during the project. Based on the experience and results of the pilot course, we enrich the international course portfolio with this topic using some important and relevant competencies such as cooperation, communication, project-based work and creative thinking. We are thinking about developing and implementing the standard-based curriculum while sharing the experience of online learning and teaching strategies. We are reflecting the relevant changes in the V4 countries via some collaborative research and project using the experience from the pilot phase.

## **References**

- Audigier, F. (2000): Basic Concepts and Core Competencies for Education for Democratic Citizenship, DGIV/EDU/CIT (2000) 23, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- Audigier, F (1996): Civic Education. Human Rights Education and the Council of Europe. CDCC, Strasbourg
- Belanger, P. (2001): Education for Democratic Citizenship: Methods, Practices and Strategies, Report, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, ISBN 92 871 4509 1.
- Bîrzéa, C., Kerr, D., Mikkelsen, R, et al. (2005). Etude paneuropéenne des politiques d'éducation à la citoyenneté démocratique. Strasbourg: Conseil

de l'Europe, p. 1–138. En ligne: <[http://www.coe.int/t/dg ... l\\_European\\_Study\\_F](http://www.coe.int/t/dg...l_European_Study_F)

Birzea, C. (2000): PROJECT ON “EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP”. Education for Democratic Citizenship: A Lifelong Learning Perspective. COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION (CDCC) Strasbourg

Cullen, Roxanne – Harris, Michael – Hill, Reinhold R. (2012): The Learner-Centered Curriculum. John Wiley and Sons, Josey-Bass A. Wiley Imprint, San Francisco, California.

Easton, Lois B. (2002): The Other Side of Curriculum. Heinemann, Portsmouth

Fadel, C., Bialik, M. and Trilling, B.: Four-Dimensional Education. Center for Curriculum Redesign, Boston, MA (2015)

Forrester, K (2000): Project on ‘Education for Democratic Citizenship’, Final Conference Report, DGIV/EDU/CIT (2000) 41, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Jacobs, H.H. ed.: Curriculum 21. ASCD, Alexandria, VA. (2010)

Kelly, A.V. (1999): The Curriculum: Theory and Practice. A SAGE Publishing Company, London

Kiss, F.; Vass, V. The Transformative Role of Innovation in the Higher Education In: Michael, E. Auer (eds.) ICL2018 – The Challenges of the Digital Transformation in Education. 21th International Conference on Interactive Collaborative Learning. 47th IGIP International Conference on Engineering Pedagogy Villach, Austria: International Society for Engineering Pedagogy (IGIP) (2018) pp. 321-330. , 10 p.

McCombs, B. L.; Whisler, J. S. (1997): The Learner-Centered Classroom and School. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco

Orbán, T. (2021): Thirty years of Visegrad. Summits, meetings and themes of a Central European cooperation. [https://www.30yearsofv4.com/thirty-years-of-visegrad-summits-meetings-and-themes-of-a-central-european-cooperation/#\\_edn22](https://www.30yearsofv4.com/thirty-years-of-visegrad-summits-meetings-and-themes-of-a-central-european-cooperation/#_edn22)

O’Shea, K. (2003): A glossary of terms for education for democratic citizenship. Developing a shared understanding. Education for democratic

citizenship 2001-2004. Strasbourg <http://thaiciviceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/A-glossary-of-terms-for-EDC.pdf>

Pinar, William F. – Irwin, Rita L. (2004): Curriculum in a New Key. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, New York and London.

Pinar, William F. (2012): What is Curriculum Theory? Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, New York and London. Schiro, Michael Stephen (2013): Curriculum Theory. SAGE, Thousand Oaks, California.

Smith, M. K.; Vass V. The relationship between internationalisation, creativity and transformation: A case study of higher education in Hungary TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2: 1 pp. 1-9. Paper: a22, 9 p. (2017)

Teaching democracy in Citizenship - a summary. <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/teaching-democracy-citizenship-summary>

Vass, V. Changing the culture of curriculum development in teacher education R&E-SOURCE 14 pp. 1-7, 7 p. (2020)

Vass, V.: Egy európai oktatási program a demokratikus állampolgárért. Új Pedagógiai Szemle 47: 6 pp. 84-91, 8 p. (1997) <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00035/00006/1997-06-vt-Vass-Europai.html>

Vass, V.; Kiss, F. The Role of Competency Development in the Implementation of Portfolio-Based Education in Higher Education. In: Michael, E. Auer; Dan, Centea (szerk.) Visions and Concepts for Education 4.0. ICBL 2020: Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Interactive Collaborative and Blended Learning (ICBL2020) Cham, Svájc: SPRINGER INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING AG (2021) 571 p. pp. 42-48, 7 p

Vass, V. The Transformation and Complexity of the Curriculum. The curriculum as a product and/or a process? ERUDITIO - EDUCATIO 13: 3 pp. 5-12, 8 p. (2018)

Vass, V.: A tudásgazdaság és a 21. századi kompetenciák összefüggései. ÚJ MUNKAÜGYI SZEMLE 1: 1 pp. 30-37, 8 p. (2020)