



# TEACHERS' ROLE IN THINK CRITICALLY- OUR EXPERIENCES

## **Critical thinking:**

- thinking about thinking,
- you think about the consequences,
- you question the obvious and your own assumptions,
- you can process information,
- you check the facts,
- you can analyze, create hypotheses and evaluate,
- you can create logical connections,
- you distinguish facts from opinions,
- problem solving,
- you recognize your own and other people's emotions (needs).

Critical thinking is recognized today as the No. 1 competence that should be developed in every class, at every educational level.

Critical thinking, more precisely attitudes, routines, tools of critical thinking create a completely new culture in the classroom. Properly implemented, they bring a lot of positive effects,

not only in the area of competence and skills development, but also change the relationship between the teacher and students. This new form of work is very beneficial for today's students - they will start to show more and more interest, motivation to learn, valued classroom discussions, teamwork, etc.

### **Some facts - Turkish teacher's experience:**

Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (1999) defines critical thinking as "examining, questioning, evaluating, and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about issues and practices" and critical action as "action based on critical thinking". I think teachers' role is essential in thinking critically, because a teacher is a role-model for students. When the teacher tells a subject or a topic, firstly he/she should wait for the students. Students think about the topic and they can share their ideas. After that, while students are thinking, they start questioning their ideas. Teachers are students' Pole Star or directive. Teachers help the students to question themselves, to think carefully, to think twice. For example, when I enter the classroom, I ask "how do you feel today?" instead of "how are you?" or I prefer to ask "think about your behaviours during the lesson and tell us about your thoughts". After I asked this question, a student starts to think and give an answer like this "I did not do anything". Then I say "think twice" to a student, he/she starts to think critically and he/she asks her/his friends, he/she questions himself/herself and then he/she gives me an answer like this "you're right teacher, I spoke with my friend, I did not listen to you", etc." By adopting this definition of critical thinking and applying their learning in education contexts, students can: become broad and adventurous thinkers, generate innovative solutions, use their reasoning skills to analyse and evaluate plan and think strategically.

#### **Thinking critically enables students to:**

think about and evaluate their own thinking and behaviour on issues related to health education, physical education and home economics, make reasonable and defensible decisions about issues related to individual and community well-being challenge and take action (individually and collectively) to address social, cultural, economic and political inequalities, understand the role and significance of culture and its influence on our daily lives and the lives of people in our community.

#### **Teachers' role:**

have a sound knowledge base from which to support students as they delve more deeply into content remain open to challenge by students, not representing themselves as the sole source of knowledge encourage students to look at the big picture by engaging them in critical-thinking

processes that have relevance beyond the classroom. Teachers need to be prepared to listen to voices that originate in the classroom and to use students' personal experiences as starting points for gathering information, encourage students to question and challenge existing beliefs, structures, and practices. Avoid offering 'how to do it' approaches, encourage students to be sensitive to the feelings of others, provide opportunities for inquiry by giving students time for planning, processing, and debriefing structure lessons so that students can work safely and co-operatively and develop creative forms of shared responsibility, encourage students to take critical action. When students learn to use democratic processes inside the classroom, they can transfer these to situations outside the classroom.

## **1. Our beginning.**

Four schools participated in the project: Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. K.K.Baczyńskiego Poland, Istituto di Istruzione Superiore "Umberto Pomilio" Italy, Kauno taikomosios dailes mokykla Lithuania, Ozel Egitimde Rasyonel Acilim Beykent Anadolu Lisesi Turkey.

In order to provide different points of view and experience during the project implementation, teachers with different qualifications were involved: foreign language teachers, teachers of vocational and technical subjects, teachers of vocational subjects - marketing, advertising and promotion, entrepreneurship, teachers of vocational subjects - fine arts, mathematicians, philosophy and ethics teachers. Our ideas can be used during the implementation of projects, educational hours, lessons, during trips and for the integration of the class team.

Our project initially covered four areas:

- immigration
- democracy - principles, democratic values, human rights
- discrimination
- civic engagement.

Due to the resignation of one of the partners in the project, we combined them into three areas:

- immigration
- democracy - principles, democratic values, human rights, civic engagement

- discrimination.

In fact, it turned out that the topics were very interconnected, and during the mobility on one of the areas, we dealt with the others.

The project implementation began with a three-day training course for the main project staff in Turkey. During the meeting, teachers took part in a lecture on the role of the teacher in the process of teaching critical thinking, in open lessons, which presented methods and forms of work implementing critical thinking among students and acquiring related skills. The meeting was concluded with a workshop on the role of the teacher in the critical thinking process, which became the starting point for planning details and project work.

## **2. Immigration.**

During the preparatory classes, students examined the phenomenon of immigration in their country, types, scale and problems related to it, they presented the collected data in an English-language presentation, which was presented during the first mobility in Poland. The teachers did not impose the direction of their work on the students, but only coordinated them and provided technical, organizational and linguistic assistance. The students also interviewed immigrants in their home country. As it turned out, these were people who immigrated for various reasons: financial, family, ideological, etc. The students presented their observations and exchanged their reflections on the similarities and differences of the problem in individual countries.

During the project classes, Polish teachers separated students into four international groups at their own discretion, so that the students could integrate, but also to set them the task of working in a new group, where they have to choose a leader again, divide work, learn about the potential of group members, learn work in a new environment, improve language skills, build the same message in several ways so that everyone in the group can understand it and solve problems. Each group randomly selected one task to be performed out of four:

Task 1: What is immigration, immigrant, emigrant? What emotions do these words cause?

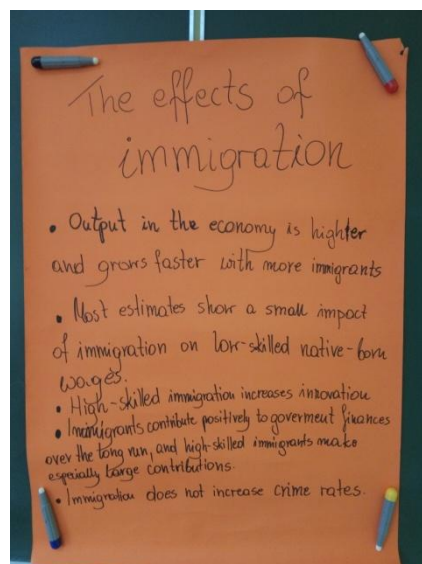
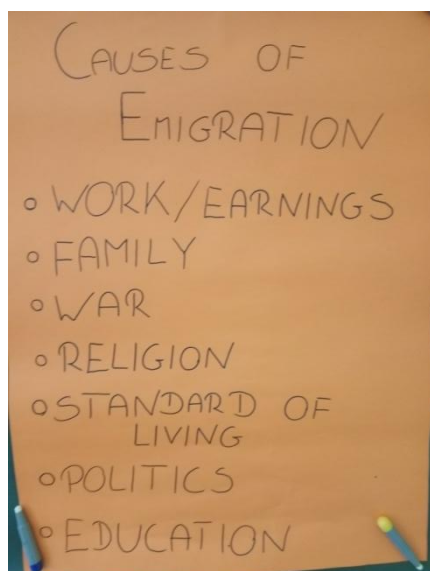
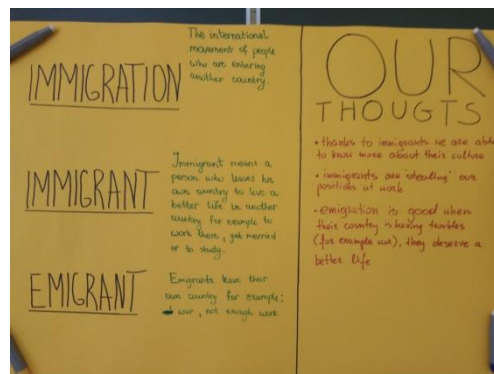
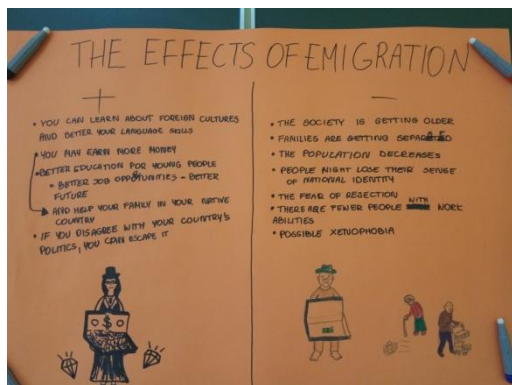
Task 2: Causes of emigration.

Task 3: The effects of emigration.

Task 4: The effects of immigration.

The students presented the results of their work, there was a discussion about the presented results, as well as new ideas and solutions were put forward.

Selected effects of our students' work:



The tasks prepared by us were later used by other teachers during meetings with class teacher, English lessons, Social Studies and meetings with school counselor.

The next stage of our work was the manipulation of facts about immigrants in the media. Polish students prepared a presentation on media manipulation techniques, and then the students had to complete another task in international groups:

Task 5: Give examples of media manipulation concerning immigrants.

The students presented the results of their work on the forum, they came to very interesting conclusions regarding various types of information messages concerning immigrants in Turkey and Italy.



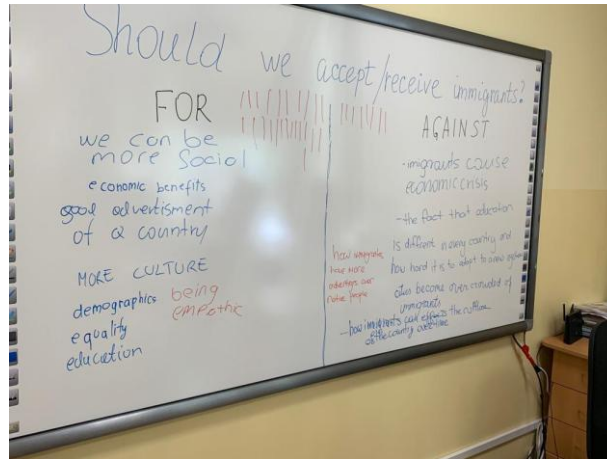
In order to make the students think about the consequences of the discrimination whose victims immigrants were, spark another discussion and to show the painful history of Europe, we took the students to the Grossrosen museum. Before leaving, we did not explain to the students what sort of museum it was. The experience was shocking for some students. As a summary, the teachers initiated a discussion about the visit to the museum and directed it in such a way that students began to think about the effects of negative attitudes towards immigrants and discrimination against them, especially since during the earlier classes it turned out that many students had a negative attitude towards immigrants. It turned out that the students looked at the problem much more broadly and began to think about how to help immigrants, what the authorities should do, and how the media influenced their opinion.

During the mobility, we organized a meeting with the Mayor of Nowa Sól and the Foreman of the Nowa Sól powiat, during which students could learn about the history of our city, including the development of democracy in Poland, learn about the social involvement of Nowa Sól citizens, the problems of Nowa Sól, the phenomenon of immigrants and emigrants in Nowa Sól.

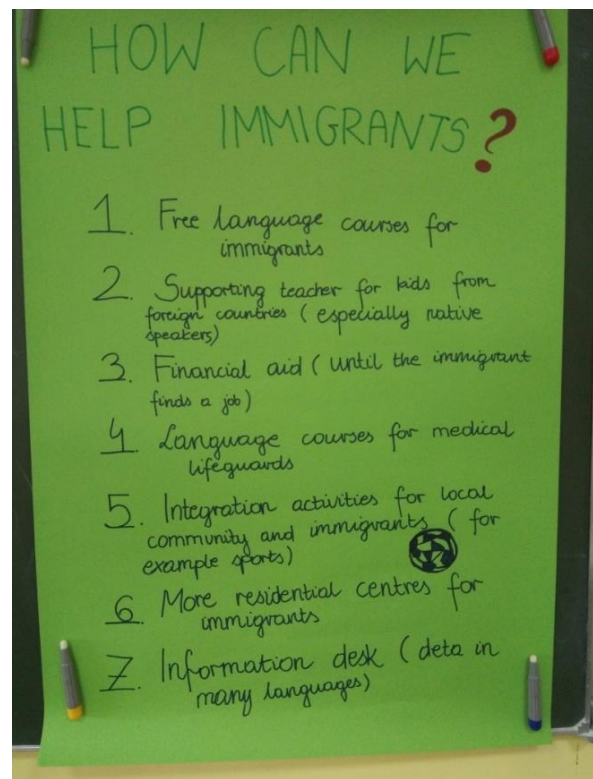
The activities were concluded with a debate. Each school chose two representatives for the debate. Two international teams were formed and select the position they were to represent. The topic of the debate was: Should we accept / receive immigrants? The students did not know the topic of the debate before. After the debate, the students of the group that were against stated that it was difficult for them to argue against, because with every argument they invented, they recalled visiting the Grossrosen museum and thought about the consequences of being against. After all the

arguments were presented, the other students voted on which team won, but also what their position was.

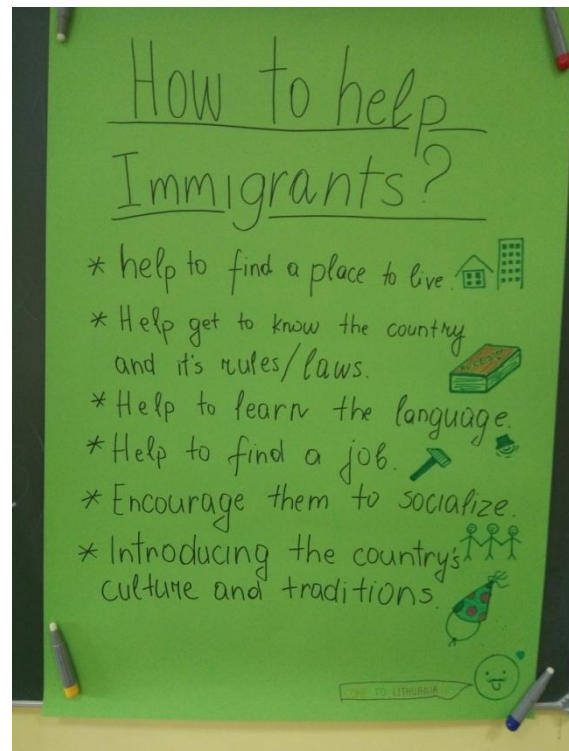
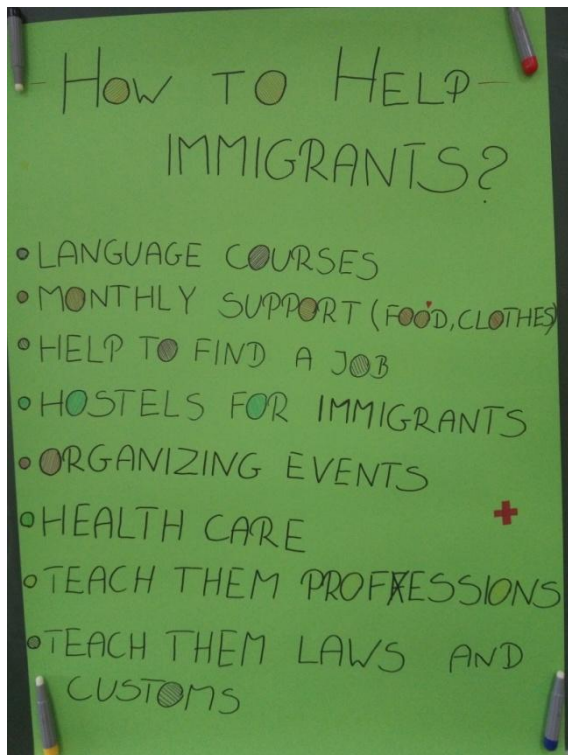
The discussion was continued also after the end of the project at the Active Citizen forum.



As part of summing up the mobility and the issues raised, students in international groups developed methods and forms of helping immigrants. As before, the groups presented their ideas to the rest participants of the project.







### 3. Democracy - principles, democratic values, human rights, civic engagement.

As part of the introductory activities, students prepared a presentation on democracy in their country, human rights and their observance. They investigated and presented cases of human rights violations in their countries. They also prepared interviews with young people who are engaged in social life in various ways.

The first part of the meeting was devoted to human rights, their observance and cases violations. After the presentation of the prepared materials, students in international groups had to discuss the following questions: What are the rights which are inalienable and why? Are there any rights that can be waived and why?". The groups then presented their positions and debated on the development of a common position.

Examples of our students' works:





The second part of our mobility was about democracy and civic engagement. First, the students presented the results of their research on democracy in their countries and interviews with young people who engage in social life. They exchanged their observations on the involvement of young people in social life, and they continued the discussion also after the end of mobility at the Active Citizen forum. The mobility took place in Italy, so the hosts organized a meeting with the Prefect of Province of Chieti and the City Mayor of Chieti. At both meetings, students together with invited guests and hosts discussed the issues of democracy, citizens' involvement in social life, human rights, but also had the opportunity to continue the topic of previous mobility, i.e. immigrants in Italy.



The summary of the issue of democracy was a trip to Rome, which was organized mainly in the footsteps of Roman democracy.



#### 4. **Discrimination.**

Before the mobility, the students examined the phenomenon of discrimination in their countries and presented the results of their work in a presentation. They also conducted a survey on discrimination in their schools / communities, interviews with discriminated people and organizations that help people who are discriminated against or socially excluded. Unfortunately, our mobility plans changed many times due to the epidemiological situation in the world. Eventually, we made the decision to extend the project and carry out the last mobility online. It required new preparations, in most schools they were conducted online, using Google tools and the GSuite platform. It was during these meetings that the teachers faced the greatest challenge regarding their role in developing critical thinking skills, and meetings in international groups were a test of these activities and their effects. First of all, we had to prepare students and teachers participating in the project to use one platform, share materials on it, establish rules for online meetings and prepare students for online speeches and proper behaviour during them.

The host's evening, getting to know the culture and customs of the host country, in this case Lithuania, was replaced by watching films about Lithuania together. We had fun searching interesting facts about Lithuania and beautiful photos that we were originally supposed to take ourselves. We also pasted our faces into the pictures we found on the Internet, at least this way we had a substitute for the travel and experiences that we missed.

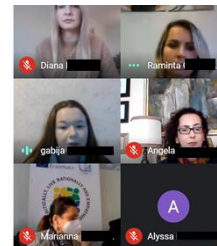


Online tasks were held on the GSuite platform, which allows meeting participants to share the screen and record the meetings. Due to the quality of the meeting and the connection, we divided the project groups into subgroups in such a way that several representatives of each country took part in international meetings every day.

Despite the kilometres between us, we were able to share presentations on discrimination, hold a debate and lively discussions. The debate concerned discrimination in the contemporary world, while the discussions concerned the reactions of the authorities at various levels on cases of discrimination and how to prevent it. We also discussed the current situation regarding women's rights in Poland and the related strikes.

#### Competence of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson:

- Investigates complaints, carries out investigations on his/hers own initiative;
- Performs independent researches, related to discrimination, and independent surveys on the discrimination state, provides conclusions and recommendations on any issue related to discrimination;
- Carries out preventive and **educational** activity, secures equal opportunities mainstreaming;
- Controls the implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provisions, related to securing equal opportunities;
- Exchanges information with various institutions and agencies from Lithuania and foreign countries, international organizations.



As in previous blocks, we moved the discussion to the Internet and on the "Active Citizen" platform where we discussed how young people can counteract discrimination. After a hard week full of longing for face-to-face meetings, each partner school summarized the project activities so

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## 5. Our interesting ideas for use or inspiration:

- **Posters: our countries and us.**

For "breaking the ice" we divided students into four international groups, each group selected the name of one of the countries participating in the project. The group's task was to draw

- For "breaking the ice" we divided

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the flag of the selected country on gray paper and to depict the students' presence in the project on it. They could draw elements of the country whose flag they drew. Then the students presented their poster, introduced themselves and had to say a few words about themselves.



#### - **City game.**

The program of our visit to Poland included visiting Wrocław, a multicultural city. However, we were afraid that sightseeing with a guide in such a large group might be difficult and boring for students. We decided to create a city game called "Curiosities of the Wrocław Market Square". It involves some work and preparation, but the game engages all students, requires their involvement, integrates the participants, competition and reward give additional motivation, students have a great time. Photos were the confirmation of the completion of the tasks, so an additional effect was a wonderful gallery from the trip.



## - **Host country evening**

Initially, we planned international integration evenings, but after the meeting in Turkey, we found that the host's evening was more attractive for the participants of the project and we were right. The hosts wanted to present everything that is typical for their country, which is worth showing and trying. The guests were glad that during that evening they could learn more about the country they visited. For this evening, the hosts prepared traditional dishes served during the holidays, made presentations about their culture, customs, history, etc. During each mobility, students had the opportunity to get to know the host's country, visit local museums, religious sites and the surrounding area. Also, the meals served were typical of the country.

