

UNIT 6
POWER AND AUTHORITY
Primary level

I am the boss! Am I?

6.1 Superhero?

What should the position of the head of the class be?

6.2 Good guys, bad guys?

What is the position of politicians in a democracy?

6.3 One person does everything, the rest do nothing?

Who is going to play what role in the system of representation?

6.4 Sharing the power

Which criteria define the system of representation?

Unit 6: Key concept – “Power and authority” (for primary level)
Background information for teachers: legitimate power –
the principle of delegation at primary level

Students aged 10 and over are able to think in abstract terms. They can recognise and develop structures in their environment and are able to differentiate between their own interests and the interests of others. As they get older, they will be able to do this more and more.

From the age of 10 onwards, students begin to understand the relationship between space and time, as well as to develop the ability to express and perceive feelings and recognise norms. By this age, students have already got to know the surroundings in which they live very well and they begin to show a great interest in the unknown. Their perception of social systems (associations, clubs, youth groups, etc.) becomes more detailed and they thus become more motivated and involved in defending other people and lobbying for their interests.

The community life of the class and the school becomes more important. How is community life organised? What rules are important? Who develops these rules and who decides on them? Who can change these rules?

In the search for answers to these questions, it is not only necessary to get to know the political system of the community or, in a wider sense, the state, but also to be able to influence structures and processes within this community – in other words, to “live” democracy.

Particularly at the secondary I level, the conditions for initiating participatory, out-of-school projects are very positive for a child’s developmental psychology. Students can recognise the cycle of political processes and understand the process of decision making. Moreover, most of the decisions relevant for students at this age are made at community level (such as traffic, leisure facilities, etc.). Students can gather important insights if they are encouraged to take on social responsibility and if they feel responsible for a part of their school life. By tackling topics like delegation, they can amass concrete experience of participation and responsibility during their daily life. The more real-world experiences that students of this age can have, and the more situations they experience which give them the possibility of influencing political processes, the higher the probability that they will participate in decision-making processes later on and will develop a sense of responsibility for society.

Power and authority – the principle of delegation – is one step in raising this awareness. The next series of lessons visualises political processes in school in a way that is analogous to those that go on outside of school. In this respect, the election of a head of class should not be an isolated activity but one that should be used as a model. In contrast to school activities such as mock elections, where students enact or re-enact political elections, the election of a head of class should have an impact on everyday life in school.

The aim of education for democratic citizenship is to support the development of competences in three areas. This unit has the following competence profile:

| Competence in ... | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| ... political analysis and judgment | ... the use of methods | ... political decision making and action |
| ** | *** | ** |

Toolbox support

In this unit the following tools from the students' toolbox will be used. The teacher must decide if some or all of the students need additional preparation in order to work with these tools.

- 0 Researching in libraries
- 0 Researching on the Internet
- 0 Carrying out interviews and surveys
- 0 Interpreting images
- 0 Mind maps
- 0 Creating posters
- 0 Holding exhibitions
- x Planning and giving presentations
- 0 Preparing overhead transparencies or a PowerPoint presentation
- 0 Writing newspaper articles
- 0 Putting on performances
- x Holding debates

Unit 6: Power and authority

I am the boss! Am I?

Legitimate power – the principle of delegation at primary level

| Lesson title | Learning objectives | Student tasks | Resources | Methods |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Lesson 1: Superhero? | The students reflect on the concept of responsibility and authorisation by discussing the position of class head. | The students discuss responsibilities, competences and the position that a head of the class should have. | Flipchart, pencils, handout, big picture of a superhero. | Individual work, group work, plenary discussion. |
| Lesson 2: Good guys, bad guys ...? | The students understand the idea that one person can represent a group of people. They develop an understanding of the concept of delegation of power and accountability. | The students compare their ideas with a schema of political representation in a democracy. They discuss their views of politicians and compare them with the opinions held by other people. They conduct short interviews in order to do this. | Schema of political representation, pencils, paper. | Individual work, pair work, plenary discussion. |
| Lesson 3: One person does everything, the rest do nothing? | The students reflect on the responsibilities and competences of different positions and understand the process of election and its consequences. | The students present the results of their interviews in class. They define the responsibilities and competences of different positions and elect a student as head of the class. | Flipchart, pencils, election cards, list of interested students for the position of class head, printed copies of handout. | Plenary discussion. |
| Lesson 4: Sharing the power | The students become acquainted with the concepts of re-election and deselection. They reflect on criteria for defining the system of representation. | The students discuss and define criteria which allow them to control the work of the head of the class. | Flipchart, pencils. | Plenary discussion. |

Lesson 1 Superhero?

What should the position of the head of the class be?

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| Learning objectives | The students reflect on the concept of responsibility and authorisation by discussing the position of class head. |
| Student tasks | The students discuss responsibilities, competences and the position that a head of the class should have. |
| Resources | Flipchart, pencils, handout, big picture of a superhero. |
| Methods | Individual work, group work, plenary discussion. |

Lesson description

The students are presented with the “superhero” handout. They are given the task of filling in the empty bubbles with the competences and responsibilities that a class head should have. They do this on their own for 10 minutes.

After they have completed their work, the students gather in groups of four and discuss their handouts. They come to a conclusion on the most relevant characteristics, competences and responsibilities that a class head should have. They write down their conclusions on slips of paper.

Each group sticks their preferences on the picture of the superhero that has been placed on the flipchart or blackboard. The teacher initiates a discussion on the following questions:

- What is the most important competence that a class head should have?
- When will the class head need support from others?
- Does the class head have to be a superhero?
- In which situations will the class head be just like everybody else?
- What weaknesses can a class head have?
- Under what circumstances do you think that the class head should be replaced by somebody else? How?
- Which wishes are impossible to fulfil for a class head?

After the discussion, the students are given the task to think about whether they could imagine running for the position of head of class. They should think about the responsibility and the competences they discussed and evaluate for themselves whether they would be able to take on this position. The teacher presents them with a sheet of paper and tells the students to write down their names if they are interested in taking on this position.

Lesson 2

Good guys, bad guys?

What is the position of politicians in a democracy?

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|---------------------|--|
| Learning objectives | The students understand the idea that one person can represent a group of people. They develop an understanding of the concept of delegation of power and accountability. |
| Student tasks | The students compare their ideas with a schema of political representation in a democracy. They discuss their views of politicians and compare them with the opinions held by other people. They conduct short interviews in order to do this. |
| Resources | Schema of political representation, pencils, paper. |
| Methods | Individual work, pair work, plenary discussion. |

Lesson description

The students are presented with the schema of political representation (handout). The teacher introduces the concept of delegation within a state and explains that just as there are class heads, there are also heads of states. They have power delegated to them.

The teacher provides information about the schema and explains the system of representation. The process of electing representatives is different in different types of state system (for example, in a direct democracy or an indirect democracy).

Working on their own, the students fill in the spaces on the handout. Then they form pairs and discuss what they know about politicians and exchange their thoughts about them. The following questions might be helpful:

- What do you think about politicians?
- Which politicians do you know?
- What should politicians do?
- What should politicians not do?
- Why do so many people think politicians are bad?

The students are then given the task to conduct interviews and ask other people for their opinions about politicians and their competences. They write down the questions they want to ask people in their family, in their circle of friends, and in their community. The teacher instructs them to make notes on people's answers. Some suggested interview questions are:

- What competences should a politician have?
- Why do you think politicians are often considered to be bad?
- What characteristics should a politician have?
- What characteristics should they not have?

The students conduct the interviews after class and bring the results to the following lesson.

Lesson 3

One person does everything, the rest do nothing?

Who is going to play what role in the system of representation?

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| Learning objectives | The students reflect on the responsibilities and competences of different positions and understand the process of election and its consequences. |
| Student tasks | The students present the results of their interviews in class. They define the responsibilities and competences of different positions and elect a student as head of the class. |
| Resources | Flipchart, pencils, election cards, list of interested students for the position of class head, printed copies of handout. |
| Methods | Plenary discussion. |

Lesson description

The students bring the results of their interviews from lesson 2 to the class. They present their results in a “flashlight” (where every student says one sentence). The teacher writes the answers about the competences of politicians on the flipchart or blackboard in order that students can visualise the trends in the answers given.

As a second step, the teacher comes back to the question of class head as a political function. The list of names of all students interested in the position is put on the blackboard. The teacher announces that in order to know who to vote for, the class has to know more about the future head of class and about his or her competences and ideas. The candidates are asked to make a short presentation about themselves that doesn't last longer than two minutes. The main focus of their presentations should be “What I stand for”.

Once all the candidates have presented themselves, the students should have the opportunity to ask questions. They can address a person individually, but they can also ask questions that have to be answered by all the candidates.

The students then vote for the candidates. The teacher introduces two different kinds of election procedure: the open ballot and the secret ballot. The students decide which procedure they want to follow.

If they decide on the secret ballot, they should use election cards on which they fill in the name of their desired candidate in secret. They should then put their cards into a basket or box. Two students should be responsible for counting the votes and writing down the results on the flipchart or blackboard.

The pupils who count the ballots announce the name of the person who has been elected as head of class, as well as the name of the person who came second – he or she will be the deputy head of class.

The teacher gives the students the following task to do at home: “Go home and ask your parents when they last voted in an election, what kind of election it was, where it took place and how the election was organised.” (Teachers should take care not to tell the students to ask their parents who they voted for, etc.). Use the handout for this task.

Lesson 4

Sharing the power

Which criteria define the system of representation?

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|---------------------|--|
| Learning objectives | The students become acquainted with the concepts of re-election and deselection. They reflect on criteria for defining the system of representation. |
| Student tasks | The students discuss and define criteria which allow them to control the work of the head of the class. |
| Resources | Flipchart, pencils. |
| Methods | Plenary discussion. |

Lesson description

The students bring their parents' answers about elections to the class. They sit in groups of four and exchange the answers their parents gave to the questions.

Next, the teacher reads the students a story about the head of a small town.

There once was a small town called Boretown where the people were rather unhappy. There were several reasons for this. Boretown was not very interesting and there was nothing to do, apart from going to the local park. There were no interesting shops there, no concerts and no places in which to hold any sports activities. There were not even any playgrounds for the children in the kindergarten and the school. The people of Boretown just walked to the park, sat down and looked at the pond. The children came home from school, did their homework and went to the park as well, then sat down or ran around the pond. In the evenings, the people in Boretown had no stories to tell, no experiences to relate and no memories to share. One day was just like another for the people of Boretown.

Why was it like that? Was Boretown too poor to build new facilities? Were the people in Boretown too lazy to do anything? No, definitely not. There was just nobody in charge of organising things, nobody who wanted to take responsibility for Boretown and somehow start changing things. Unlike a lot of other small towns, Boretown did not have a head of town – a mayor.

Because the situation in Boretown had become unbearable, one Sunday a group of people in the park decided to hold elections and to elect someone to be in charge of Boretown – they decided to elect a mayor. Something had to change! And quickly!

There weren't very many people who wanted to do this job. Only two candidates stood for election. One was the local teacher, Mr Knowles, who had wanted to change things in the school and outside of it for years. He had some ideas on how to do this, but when people asked him what he would change in Boretown he said that he didn't know at the moment and that he would first have to ask the people what they thought would be needed. A lot of people were disappointed. They had thought that Mr Knowles would come up with ideas for a big shopping centre with a cinema and a food hall. They had thought that they would finally get their huge adventure swimming pool. They had thought that Mr Knowles would promise to build a concert hall. What a disappointment this was for the people of Boretown!

When the second candidate, Mr Slimington, stepped onto the stage, the people of Boretown did not expect much. "This is a waste of time; nothing will change in Boretown in any case", said one of the old men. "I guess you are right", whispered an old woman next to him. Mr Slimington, a handsome young man, started his speech. He spoke and he spoke. He spoke of Boretown as his hometown, he mentioned the school he went to and he mentioned the park he grew up in. He mentioned how things had to change in Boretown. He talked about the playgrounds that were needed for the children, he

talked about the new swimming pool that everyone wanted, he mentioned the long-awaited concert hall and he even mentioned a roller skating park for the teenagers. As Mr Slimington's speech went on, the faces of the Boretown people lit up in delight. Suddenly everybody was smiling. "Well, maybe we were wrong", whispered the old woman again. "Yes, maybe", answered the old man, already long-ing for a swim in the new pool.

"How we will pay for this?", Mr Slimington asked the audience. "No problem! I suggest we all put our savings together and I'll get the things built one after the other. That way we'll all get something." This sounded very fair to the people of Boretown. When the elections took place on the following Sunday, only two people out of the whole of Boretown didn't vote for Mr Slimington. He was the clear winner. The only two people who voted for Mr Knowles were Mr Knowles himself and his mother. But now things would change in Boretown. Everybody knew it. There was finally somebody who had clear ideas on what to do and even an idea how to pay for it all. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that everyone in Boretown would give Mr Slimington all the money they had saved over the years – and he happily took the money that people gave him.

For a long time after the elections, the people of Boretown remained cheerful, as they knew that they would soon have all the things they wanted. Month after month went by, but still no building sites could be seen in Boretown; no diggers were seen starting construction work and no workers were seen working on the new buildings.

One afternoon, a machine rolled into Boretown carrying a big, funny-shaped blue thing on top. "Our swimming pool has arrived", shouted one of the young boys in the school playground as it rolled by. "Cool", shouted everybody else. What they discovered only days later was that the swimming pool had been delivered to Mr Slimington's house and had been built in his garden. People were starting to wonder. Some started to doubt his promises, but some still believed that their own pool would soon arrive and so remained patient.

Only a week later, a group of old men saw a huge, expensive car driving by, gold and shiny in the sunlight. "Ha!ha!, I didn't know we were going to have a visit from the Queen", joked one of the old men. The others joined in the laughter, until they saw who sat behind the wheel: Mr Slimington. Instead of using the money for new playgrounds, he had bought himself a new car. People in Boretown became very upset.

There was another incident the week after, when Mr Letterman, the Boretown postman came back from his daily rounds and told his friends what had happened to him that day. "Imagine, when I was driving past Mr Slimington's villa, I heard a funny noise, something like the sound an elephant makes. So I decided to stop and take a closer look." "And, what did you see?", asked his friends curiously. "That's the unbelievable thing: when I peeped through the metal fence I saw that it was a huge elephant that was making the noise." "Really?", his friends asked in disbelief. "Yes, really, until I discovered that it was only a film. But I've never seen such a huge cinema screen before! I'm telling you that Mr Slimington has built himself the biggest open air cinema in the world." Nobody could believe this. What had happened to their concert hall? People in Boretown became even more upset. But what could they do? After all, they had voted for him.

"It's none of MY business", said Mr Knowles, the teacher, when the group of people who had decided to hold the elections in the first place came to ask him for advice. "You voted for him and now he's the Mayor of Boretown", Mr Knowles remarked. "But this is unfair", the people said. "He's even used up the rest of the money that was meant for the roller skating park to build himself his favourite fast-food restaurant in his garden. Now he can eat as many hamburgers and doughnuts as he wants to all day long. And we still all sit in the park and get bored, and our children still sit in the park and get bored." "I know", said Mr Knowles and closed his eyes and rubbed his chin with his hand. "I know, and we have to do something ..."

In their groups, the students then discuss how the story could continue, focusing on three questions:

- What could the people of Boretown have done beforehand?
- What could they do now? After all, they had voted for Mr Slimington in the first place.

- How could something like this be prevented in the future?

They write down their answers on a piece of flipchart paper and present them to the class in the plenary discussion.

Once all the groups have presented their ideas, the teacher shifts the discussion to the situation in their class and asks the following questions:

- How can we make sure that the class head does what we agreed on?
- What mechanisms can we think of that would make sure of this?
- Who could do this?
- What will happen if we find out something is wrong?
- Who can decide on a change of class head?

The students discuss this in the plenary session and come up with suggestions. They vote on their suggestions and decide on a joint solution. The agreement is written down and signed by everyone, including the head of class and his or her deputy.