

UNIT 3
DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM
Upper secondary level

Consent through dissent?
How do we agree on the common good?

"La multitude qui ne se réduit pas à l'unité est confusion;
l'unité qui ne dépend pas de la multitude est tyrannie."

[Diversity that cannot be reduced to unity is confusion;
unity that ignores diversity is tyranny.]

Blaise Pascal (1623–62)

3.1 If I were president ...

The students define their political priorities

3.2 What goals do we want to promote?

The students establish political parties

3.3 What is the common good?

Consent through dissent

3.4 Taking part in pluralist democracy

The students reflect on their experience

Unit 3

Diversity and pluralism

Consent through dissent?

Introduction for teachers

1. The links between diversity, pluralism and democracy

Diversity – some examples

- Workers and employers argue about wages and working hours.
- Environmentalists argue with the truck drivers' lobby about plans for a new road.
- Parents want more teachers to attend to the needs of their children. A lobby of taxpayers wants taxes to be reduced.
- Doctors and non-smokers want a complete ban on smoking in bars and restaurants. Landlords and cigarette makers promote free smoking everywhere.
- Young people would like an empty building to be turned into a youth centre. The residents nearby fear that there will be too much noise at night.

The concept of **diversity** refers to the ways in which people differ – in their interests, but also in many other ways too: in their lifestyles, ethnic origin, beliefs and values, in their social status, gender, generation, dialect and region (urban or rural, for example). Diversity also increases – as one feature of social and economic change.

Is diversity a problem?

According to the theories of **pluralism**, the answer is no. In democratic systems, anyone who promotes individual or group interests is exercising human rights – for example, demonstrating in public is exercising freedom of expression. The concept of pluralism therefore acknowledges diversity – it is a fact, something “normal”, but it poses a challenge. How can the different interests between different groups and individuals be reconciled? What is the best solution to the conflicts and problems that they articulate? This is the question of the **common good**.

What is the common good?

According to the theories of pluralism, no one knows what the common good is before a public discussion on this issue has taken place. We have to agree on what serves us best. The common good is something to be negotiated. Let us look at two of the examples above.

- Workers and their employers must agree on a wage that gives workers a decent standard of living, and allows the employers to keep costs under control.
- The issue on the youth centre might be settled by building the centre, but imposing rules so as to protect the neighbours from too much noise. The best solution must be found through dialogue and negotiation, and the result is most often a compromise.

Pluralism is therefore linked to a constructivist concept of the common good. First all the players articulate their different interests, and then they look for a solution that everyone can accept. Therefore there is nothing “egoistic” about clearly voicing one’s interests. On the contrary, this is part of the process, but no one must expect to see their interests completely fulfilled. The concept of constructivism emphasises that there is an element of learning involved, following the pattern of trial and

error. Practice will show how good a solution is, and it may have to be changed or improved – in a new round of discussions and negotiations.

In what way is pluralism linked to democracy?

Pluralism is a form of competition. The players compete with each other to promote their interests, and negotiation involves both power and reasoning. But this kind of competition also ensures that no player in the field becomes dominant. Diversity and pluralism create a structure of polyarchy (power in the hands of many), which is the social equivalent of the principle of checks and balances in a democratic constitution. Pluralism draws on liberalism by extending competition from economy to society and politics.

How does pluralism manage to resolve conflicts of interest peacefully?

Diversity and pluralism allow for a great deal of dissent on interests and issues (a “sphere of dissent”). This will only work if there is a “sphere of consent”. Pluralism requires the citizens to agree on certain basic values and rules:

- Mutual recognition: other players are viewed as opponents, but not as enemies.
- Non-violence: negotiations are carried out by peaceful means, that is by words, and not by physical force.
- Accepting compromise: all players realise and accept that a decision can only be reached through compromise.
- Rule of the majority: if a decision is voted on, the majority decides.
- Trial and error: if conditions change, or a decision is proved wrong, new negotiations take place.
- Fairness: decisions must comply with human rights.

Criticism of the concept of pluralism

Critics have pointed out that in the pluralist model, there is power in the hands of many, but due to diversity, it is unequally distributed. Therefore some players have better chances in the competition of interests than others.

This argument highlights a constitutive tension between liberty and equality – it is constitutive, which means it is ineradicable, both for democracy and human rights. Pluralists promote the liberal understanding of competitive democracy, the critics insist on the egalitarian reading of democracy.

Within the pluralist model, the tension between liberty and equality is the core of the question on the common good. Liberty means competition, and competition produces winners and losers, i.e. inequality. So when deciding on the common good, the players involved must consider the needs of the weak.

Is there an alternative to pluralism?

The rejection of pluralism implies giving in to the “authoritarian temptation”. The common good is defined by an authority, and whoever disagrees is oppressed as an enemy. Communist parties are an example in point. They claimed sole leadership on the grounds of being able to define the common good by scientific means. Both liberal and egalitarian democracy was rejected.

Ultimately, the alternative to pluralist democracy is a form of dictatorship. This is reflected in Winston Churchill’s remark that “democracy is the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried”. Pluralist democracy is not without risks, but seems to be the best form of government to handle diversity among its members peacefully.

2. Taking part in democracy – what this unit offers

The students learn that they are taking part in a pluralist democracy:



- They must make themselves heard if they want their interests and ideas to be considered; taking part in democracy also means taking part in the competition of pluralism.
- Taking part in democracy means negotiating for the common good.
- Taking part in democracy requires all players to accept the basic values of mutual recognition, non-violence, willingness to compromise, and rule of the majority.

The unit applies the task-based learning approach. The students understand diversity by experiencing it in class, and they understand pluralism by getting actively involved in the negotiation process on the common good

Lesson 1: first, the students are asked to share their ideas on what they would have at the top of their agenda if they were president or head of government in their country. The students will experience that there is a diversity of opinions and ideas between them. The class is a model of diversity in society as a whole.

Lessons 2 and 3: then the process of negotiation starts. The students who share a certain outlook or basic approach form political parties (other types of groups are omitted in this model setting); others may choose to stand alone. The students define their goals and priorities, and then negotiate. They may or may not find a decision or compromise that everyone, or at least the majority, can agree to – as in reality. They will experience the advantages of organisations, such as parties, over individuals in the competition for setting the agenda and defining solutions.

Lesson 4: the students reflect on their experience and give feedback on the unit.

The teacher's role is that of a facilitator. The students carry the unit through their activities. A few brief inputs by the teacher are suggested to support constructivist learning by the students through instruction on the key concepts. The teacher delivers these inputs when the students are ready for them. The  student handouts and the  materials for teachers provide the resources and information.

Competence development: links to other units in this volume

What this table shows

The title of this manual, *Taking part in democracy*, focuses on the competences of the active citizen in democracy. This matrix shows the potential for synergy effects between the units in this manual. The matrix shows what competences are developed in unit 3 (the shaded row in the table). The strongly framed column shows the competences of political decision making and action – strongly framed because of their close links to taking part in democracy. The rows below indicate links to other units in this manual: what competences are developed in these units that support the students in unit 3?

How this matrix can be used

Teachers can use this matrix as a tool for planning their EDC/HRE classes in different ways.

- The matrix makes teachers aware of synergy effects that help the students to be trained in important competences repeatedly, in different contexts that are linked in many ways.
- This matrix helps teachers who have only a few lessons to devote to EDC/HRE: a teacher can select only this unit and omit the others, as he/she knows that some key competences are also developed, to a certain extent, in this unit – for example, making choices, understanding the pluralism of identities, exercising rights of liberty, responsibility in making choices that affect others.

Units	Dimensions of competence development			Attitudes and values
	Political analysis and judgment	Methods and skills	Taking part in democracy Political decision making and action	
3 Diversity and pluralism	Identifying areas of shared intent and conflict Two dimensions of politics: solving problems and struggle for power	Speaking in public Appealing to others Time management	Identifying political priorities and goals Negotiating and decision making	Self-confidence, self-esteem Willingness to compromise
6 Government and politics	Politics: a process of solving problems Power dimension in agenda setting			
4 Conflict			Negotiating and decision making	
5 Rules and law			Agreeing on a framework of rules	Mutual recognition

UNIT 3: Diversity and pluralism – Consent through dissent? How do we agree on the common good?

Lesson topic	Competence training/learning objectives	Student tasks	Materials and resources	Method
Lesson 1 If I were president ...	<p>Defining political priorities, acting within settings of public discussion and decision making, living with open situations of “confusion”.</p> <p>Making a choice, and reflecting on the criteria.</p> <p>Creating a matrix based on categories.</p> <p>Making a brief statement and giving reasons.</p> <p>Four basic political standpoints: liberal, social democrat, conservative, green.</p>	<p>The students define, present and compare their political priorities.</p>	<p>A3 sheet (a prompt for the students).</p> <p>📄 Materials for teachers 3A.</p> <p>✍ Student handout 3.1.</p> <p>A paper strip for each student, ideally with a marker each.</p>	<p>Presenting and analysing policy statements; individual work; plenary discussion.</p>
Lesson 2 What goals do we want to promote?	<p>Negotiating, balancing insistence on one’s own goals, and the acknowledgement of the others’ goals.</p> <p>Political parties generate the power necessary to promote political goals. They do so by aggregating and compromising.</p>	<p>The students negotiate a shared agenda of political priorities.</p> <p>They present their party profiles in a publicity event.</p>	<p>✍ Student handouts 3.1-3.4.</p> <p>📄 Materials for teachers 3B.</p>	<p>Group work, plenary presentations, lecture.</p>

<p>Lesson 3 What is the common good?</p>	<p>Participation: negotiation skills. Analysing goals for shared intent. Politics has two dimensions: the solution of problems and the struggle for power. Compromise is the price to pay for support and an agreement.</p>	<p>The students negotiate a decision.</p>	<p>A4 paper strips and markers. Demonstration strips for the “diamond analysis”.</p>	<p>Decision-making game; individual, group and plenary sessions.</p>
<p>Lesson 4 Taking part in pluralist democracy</p>	<p>Structuring the results of one’s work. Making brief statements, giving feedback. Pluralism supports fair and effective decision making. “Consent through dissent.” I promote my interests by taking part in democracy.</p>	<p>The students reflect on and discuss their experience and give feedback on the unit.</p>	<p>Flipcharts and markers, a copy of ✎ student handout 2.5 (UDHR) and 2.6 (ECHR).</p>	<p>“Wall of silence”. Individual work, presentation and discussion. Flashlight round.</p>

Lesson 1

If I were president ...

The students define their political priorities

This matrix sums up the information a teacher needs to plan and deliver the lesson.

Competence training refers directly to EDC/HRE.

The learning objective indicates what students know and understand.

The student task(s), together with the method, form the core element of the learning process.

The materials checklist supports lesson preparation.

The time budget gives a rough guideline for the teacher's time management.

Competence training	Participation: defining political priorities, acting within settings of public discussion and decision making, living with open situations of "confusion". Judgment: making a choice, and reflecting on the criteria. Analysis: creating a matrix based on categories. Methods and skills: making a brief statement and giving reasons.
Learning objective	The students are able to define their position between four basic political standpoints: liberal, social democrat, conservative, green.
Student tasks	The students define, present and compare their political priorities.
Materials and resources	A3 sheet (a prompt for the students). 📄 Materials for teachers 3A. ✂ Student handout 3.1. A paper strip for each student, ideally with a marker each.
Method	Presenting and analysing policy statements; individual work; plenary discussion.
Time budget	Stage 1: The students define political goals. 25 min
	Stage 2: The students analyse their decisions. 15 min

Information box

In the first lesson, the students experience their class as a micro society. They create a diversity of individual viewpoints and political preferences. The students will realise that such a situation needs to be clarified. If each of them imagines that he or she is the political leader of their country and defines his/her top priorities, it is obvious that some choices must be made.

The teacher facilitates the process that follows in this and the following lessons. If the students take their goals seriously, they will be interested in bargaining for a decision that they can accept.

Lesson description

Stage 1: The students define political goals

Step 1.1: Preparation

The students and teacher are seated in a circle with an open space on the floor in the middle. The desks have been moved aside; at least one desk in each corner of the classroom is ready for use.

The students have their equipment at hand for taking notes.

Each student receives one strip of paper, ideally with a marker.

The teacher has the A3 sheet at hand (“If I were president ...”), see below.

Step 1.2: The students make their decisions⁸

The teacher explains to the students that this is the start of a new unit. The students are introduced to the topic through an activity with the following instruction:

Imagine that you have just become president⁹ of this country.

If I were president of our country, my top priority would be ...

The teacher lays down the prompt sheet in the middle of the circle.

What will your top priority be?

Complete this statement. Here are some points to consider:

You could choose to introduce a concrete measure to achieve a goal at once – or take a first step on the way to achieving a long-term goal.

What group, issue or problem concerns you most?

The students are to think about these questions in silence, and write down their decisions on their paper strip. They should not share their ideas yet, as this will take place in the plenary round.

Each student should present one decision only. If they have more options in mind, they should record these in their notes.

Step 1.3: The students present their decisions

The students present their decisions in turn. They complete the statement “My top priority would be ...” and give their main reasons. They put down their strip in the open space on the floor.

It is to be expected that some students will arrive at similar ideas. As soon this happens, the teacher points this out and suggests grouping these statements together. The strips are clustered accordingly, and an appropriate heading is given, such as “Fight poverty”, or “Improve education”.

The teacher encourages the students to join in the structuring of the inputs. No further discussion or comment on the decisions themselves takes place as long as some students have not had their turn to take the floor.

The result will probably be some clusters, and perhaps also some statements that stand alone.

8. This method is a variation of Exercise 6.3, “If I were a magician” in *Teaching democracy*, EDC/HRE Volume VI, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2008, p. 59.

9. The teacher uses the official term for the head of government in the country.

Stage 2: The students analyse their decisions

Step 2.1: The students describe the diversity of their choices

The teacher facilitates this step with an open question:

- Describe the “political landscape” that you have created.


Several students should respond. They may well address the following question; if not, the teacher does so:

- What is the basic idea that links the ideas that form clusters, and for what reasons have other students chosen a different position?

The students will describe the structure of diversity. As they are dealing with options for a political decision, and not with an open exchange of ideas, they will become aware of the need to reach an agreement – by bringing some suggestions together, and by excluding others. The richness of ideas is the product of many citizens taking part in the discussion, exercising their freedom of thought, opinion and expression. A decision must be made, but who makes it?


If necessary, the teacher instructs the students on this decisive insight.

Step 2.2: The teacher gives an information input on basic political standpoints

Each corner of the room stands for one of the four political standpoints. The teacher has provided the briefing papers (prepared with clippings from  materials for teachers 3A) on the desks. The teacher introduces each position in turn, and a student reads out the statements to the class.

The teacher invites the students to use this information:

- Which basic outlook corresponds to their policy statement, or clusters, and which does not?
- Can they identify with any position, or are they somewhere in between? Or would they prefer to define a new position?

The teacher distributes  student handout 3.1 – the schedule of the unit. The challenge for the students is to define their position in the “political landscape”. Political parties are important mediators between different interests, values and preferences. The students are therefore invited to form parties with the objective of promoting the political goals that they have put forward in this lesson. The teacher adds that the students are exercising the human right of political participation. They are free to join or to leave a party, to establish a new party, or stay outside parties altogether. The schedule models a process of political decision making – from political goals in peoples’ minds to the temporary agreement on the common good.

Step 2.3: The students meet in their new parties

During the last minutes of the lesson, the students meet in their parties. They receive  student handouts 3.2 and 3.3 to support them in their discussion.

The teacher talks to the students who have chosen not to join or form a party. They should understand that in this setting, as in reality, parties are the stronger players and will take the leadership. If they take their own goals seriously, they must take an interest in seeing them put into practice. For this to happen, an element of power is necessary. Parties are able to create such potential for power. Therefore the students should consider one of the following options:

- If you have additional options, perhaps noted down earlier, consider joining a party on the grounds of such goals.
- Talk to each other to find out if you can establish a party.
- Wait for the parties’ policy statements and then make a choice.

Lesson 2

What goals do we want to promote?

The students establish political parties

This matrix sums up the information a teacher needs to plan and deliver the lesson.

Competence training refers directly to EDC/HRE.

The learning objective indicates what students know and understand.

The student task(s), together with the method, form the core element of the learning process.

The materials checklist supports lesson preparation.

The time budget gives a rough guideline for the teacher's time management.

Competence training	Participation: Negotiating – balancing insistence on one's own goals, and the acknowledgement of the others' goals.	
Learning objective	Political parties generate the power necessary to promote political goals. They do so by aggregating the individual members' views and interests, and who are therefore required to compromise.	
Student tasks	The students negotiate a shared agenda of political priorities. They present their party profiles in a publicity event.	
Materials and resources	<p>✎ Student handouts 3.1-3.4.</p> <p>📄 Materials for teachers 3B.</p>	
Method	Group work, plenary presentations, lecture.	
Time budget	Stage 1: The students define the profiles of their parties.	15 min
	Stage 2: Publicity event: the parties present their profiles.	10 min
	Stage 3: The teacher introduces the constructivist concept of the common good.	5 min
	Stage 4: The students discuss their negotiation strategies.	10 min

Information box

The students are given most of the lesson for their activities and should complete them within in a tight time schedule (see ✎ student handout 3.1).

The teacher gives a brief lecture that offers the students a new perspective on their current experience. The teacher addresses a lot that students already know, and introduces the key concepts of this unit – diversity, pluralism, the common good.

Through this interplay of constructivist learning, instruction, and a new phase of constructivist learning, the concepts are meaningful for the students, as they help the students to understand the situation they are in.

Lesson description

The teacher refers to the agenda of the lesson (see student handout 3.1). The parties adopt their position in the “political landscape” – literally taking their seats there – and work out their profiles. The publicity event will help everyone to define their position – in co-operation or in confrontation with other parties.

Stage 1: The students define their parties' profiles and agendas

Step 1.1: The students identify their position in the “political landscape”

The students who had clustered their policy statements in the previous lesson should now decide where their position is in the “political landscape”. They mark their position with their desks and chairs. Their position could be in one corner, or anywhere in between. In this way, the space between the parties indicates, in a very literal sense, which parties are closer to or in opposition with each other. The closer two parties are, the better their chances will be to form a coalition with common goals.

The students who have chosen not to join a party gather in a free area, preferably in the middle of the room. They share their views. If they wish, the teacher joins them as facilitator. He/she should not persuade them to join a party, but listens to their questions and objections. The students decide whether and how to participate, not the teacher.

The parties should admit new members at any time, as in reality. Students also have the right to leave a party.

Step 2.2: The parties define their profiles

Guided by see student handouts 3.2 and 3.3, the students work out their parties' profiles. The teacher watches and listens, but does not intervene unless asked for support or in the case of serious problems.

Stage 2: Publicity event – the parties present their profiles

This is a publicity event for parties, not for individual students. This can be justified by the limited amount of time available. The parties aggregate individual viewpoints, which serves to reduce the diversity of individual opinions.

Each party has the same amount of time – 2 or 3 minutes, depending on the total number of parties. The teacher makes this clear to the students while they are preparing their presentation, and enforces this rule strictly – for obvious reasons of fairness.

As suggested in see student handout 3.2, the speakers may be expected to appeal to those students who have not yet made their choice. Second, they may attempt to compete with the other parties. Flyers or posters can support the parties.

All students, whether party members or not, can decide to join or leave a party after the event.

Stage 3: The teacher gives an input for reflection: the common good

This input – a brief lecture supported by see student handout 3.4 – serves to link the students' experience with the key concepts of diversity and pluralism. By inserting the lecture into the context of experience and interaction that the students have created, interplay between constructivist learning and systematic instruction takes place.

 Materials for teachers 3B offers a draft outline for the lecture.

The students can ask for further clarification if necessary. Otherwise no discussion is necessary, as the students can think about this input in their further work.

Stage 4: The parties prepare their negotiation strategies

The teacher refers to the schedule (see student handout 3.1). In the following lesson, the parties have the opportunity to negotiate with each other. Can they form an alliance, a coalition? There will be a round table session to give all parties and individual students the opportunity to negotiate their idea of the common good. In the last phase of this lesson, the students can prepare their strategies for the negotiations.

- What goals will they give priority?
- What party or parties do they want to approach in the first round of bilateral talks?
- How many delegations will the party set up?

The students resume their internal discussions in their parties. Unless they call the teacher for support, they work on their own.

Lesson 3

What is the common good?

Consent through dissent

This matrix sums up the information a teacher needs to plan and deliver the lesson.

Competence training refers directly to EDC/HRE.

The learning objective indicates what students know and understand.

The student task(s), together with the method, form the core element of the learning process.

The materials checklist supports lesson preparation.

The time budget gives a rough guideline for the teacher's time management.

Competence training	Participation: negotiation skills. Analysis: analysing goals for shared intent.
Learning objective	Politics has two dimensions: the solution of problems and the struggle for power. Compromise is the price to pay for support and an agreement.
Student tasks	The students negotiate a decision.
Materials and resources	A4 paper strips and markers. Demonstration strips for the "diamond analysis".
Method	Decision-making game; individual, group and plenary sessions.
Time budget	Stage 1: The students define their proposals. 10 min
	Stage 2: The students negotiate at a round table. 30 min

Information box

The unit models the process of negotiating goals defined by a shared understanding of the common good. In this lesson, the students' task is to strive for this goal. They may succeed, or they may not. Their effort and experience is as important as the result.

The teacher continues performing in the role of a facilitator. For example, he/she presents models for negotiation but does not comment on the contents.

During the first phase, special attention should be given to those students who experience exclusion because they have not joined a party.

Lesson description

Starter: the teacher gives details of the schedule

The teacher refers to the schedule (≈ student handout 3.1) and reminds the students of their task. In this lesson, they will negotiate a political agenda. What goals do they propose?

Stage 1: The students define their goals

The students decide what goals to propose. Parties and individuals alike can make a proposal. This seems to give individual “non-aligned” students an advantage; on the other hand, a party proposal has a better chance of being voted to the top of the agenda.

The group speakers or individual students prepare a brief promotion statement.

The students note their goal on a paper strip using a marker.

Stage 2: The students negotiate at a “round table”

The teacher insists on beginning punctually. The students are seated in a circle of chairs; this does not quite fit the “round table” metaphor, but supports communication best. Parties who have formed a coalition sit next to each other.

Step 2.1: The students make their proposals

The teacher opens the round table talks and gives each party speaker, and also individual students, the chance to take the floor. The teacher requests them to report on any agreements they have made, and to make a proposal for a joint decision. They lay down their paper strip on the floor.

Step 2.2: The students analyse their goals and explore opportunities of compromising and integration

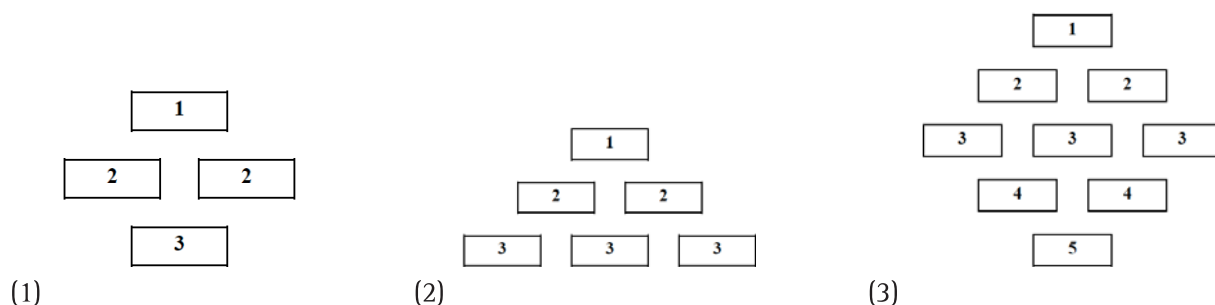
After everyone has spoken, the teacher facilitates possible links and compromises between the students’ proposals.

- Do some of the proposals fit together well? Can these cards be clustered?
- Which proposals exclude each other? Here the students should look at the proposals carefully. Do the goals exclude each other? Or do the goals share the same intent, but demand a big input of effort, resources or money?

Step 2.3: The teacher suggests a model for negotiation

The teacher suggests a model to design a political agenda of goals for the common good. With A4 paper strips marked with numbers as indicated below, he/she introduces model No. 1, a simplified version of the classic “diamond analysis” model (model No. 3).

In the four-goal variant, one goal is given top priority. Two goals are given a second rank, and one goal that is considered to be less important or urgent is given rank 3 (or is omitted altogether – then the teacher removes goal No. 3).



This tight model with three or four goals requires negotiation, as a lot of goals cannot be permitted. On the other hand, fewer goals are easier to implement than an agenda that everybody is happy with, but that is more complicated to handle (the dilemma between inclusion and efficiency). The teacher adds the strips to turn model No. 1 into models Nos. 2 and 3.

The teacher finally points out that all models define only one top priority. So a further, very radical option, would be to define just one goal:

1

Step 2.4: The students negotiate

The students have several questions to agree on. At the same time, these questions open up different paths to compromise and majority support.

- Which model do we choose – how many goals do we want to include?
- Which goals do we give top priority?
- Could we possibly all agree on just one goal?
- Which goals do we include in our agenda? Goals that support each other, or that exclude each other? (The first option works for efficiency, the second for inclusion.)
- Does the agenda as a whole make sense?

Here careful reasoning and arguing is required. Parties have stronger backing for their goals, but others may have better ideas. It is therefore an open question what goals win the highest support.

The inclusion of goals that exclude each other (e.g. green + conservative) is typical for coalitions between parties or all-party rule. The streamlined model of goals (all defined by one party) is more competitive and conflict oriented. The choice between these models is therefore also a choice of political cultures – ways to handle pluralism in democracy. The teacher observes how the students deal with this issue and decides whether to address it in the reflection lesson.

The students shift the cards on the floor to create their agenda model (to form a diamond or pyramid shape). If several models include the same goals, duplicates are used so that the models can be compared.

The cards are finally stuck on to flipcharts to create posters. These will be used in the following lesson.

Step 2.5: The students vote

At the end of the meeting, the students vote by a show of hands. If they have agreed on one set of goals, a unanimous vote may be expected.

If different models have emerged, the students vote on these models.

In this case the teacher suggests the following voting procedure, which must be decided on (by vote) before the voting on the models begins: if any model wins a majority of over 50%, it is accepted. Otherwise a second vote is cast, this time between the two models with the highest number of votes. To account for abstentions, the model with the highest number of votes is accepted.

Lesson 4

Taking part in pluralist democracy

The students reflect on their experience

This matrix sums up the information a teacher needs to plan and deliver the lesson.

Competence training refers directly to EDC/HRE.

The learning objective indicates what students know and understand.

The student task(s), together with the method, form the core element of the learning process.

The materials checklist supports lesson preparation.

The time budget gives a rough guideline for the teacher's time management.

Competence training	Analysis and judgment: structuring the results of one's work. Methodical skills: making brief statements, giving feedback.
Learning objective	Pluralism supports fair and effective decision making. "Consent through dissent." I promote my interests by taking part in democracy.
Student tasks	The students reflect on and discuss their experience and give feedback on the unit.
Materials and resources	Flipcharts and markers; a copy of \approx student handout 2.5 (UDHR) and 2.6 (ECHR).
Method	"Wall of silence". Individual work, presentation and discussion. Flashlight round.
Time budget	Stage 1: The students reflect on their experience ("Wall of silence"). 20 min
	Stage 2: Follow-up discussion. 15 min
	Stage 3: The students give feedback. 5 min

Information box

Reflection is constructivist learning. The students form their views and share them with each other. The teacher's role is to provide a framework of suitable methods and scheduling. This is an example of teaching through human rights: the students exercise freedom of thought and expression. The strict framework gives every student an opportunity to participate. Such opportunities will never be perceived as equal, as different learning types respond differently to the methods that the teacher has chosen.

The teacher only takes a small amount of speaking time. However, through defining the framework and schedule of the lesson, the teacher's leadership is present all the time. As in other units, the students experience the paradox that liberty not only goes together well with strict rules and leadership, but may even require them.

Lesson description

Preparations:

The political agenda models that the students voted on in the previous lesson are hung up.

Four flipcharts (the “walls of silence”) are hung up around the classroom, with 2-3 markers in different colours placed nearby. The flipcharts should be accessible, with 5-6 chairs in a semicircle around them. Alternatively, the flipcharts can be laid out on two or three desks moved together.

The teacher has prepared the flipcharts before the lesson by writing down the key questions (see below). Spare flipcharts are at hand if the students need extra writing space.

The seating arrangement supports communication. No frontal seating, but a circle of chairs, or desks in an open square – whatever works best with the arrangement of the flipcharts.

Stage 1: The students reflect on their experience (“walls of silence”)

Step 1.1: The teacher instructs the students on how to use the “walls of silence”¹⁰

The students and the teacher are seated. The teacher refers to the topic of the lesson in the schedule (≈ student handout 3.1) – reflecting and looking back, rather than taking in new information or working on a new task. In a reflection session, the students should think, share their ideas, and discuss them.

The teacher introduces the “wall of silence” method and explains why it has been chosen: it is a good method to support reflection, and it gives the students a maximum share of time for thinking and communicating.

The teacher refers to the four posters – the four “walls of silence”:

- **Pluralism**

How did I experience pluralism?

- **Consent through dissent?**

For what reasons did we succeed, or fail, in agreeing on a definition of the common good?

- **Diverse power distribution**

How did we feel being one of the stronger or weaker players?

- **Human rights**

What human rights have we exercised in these lessons? (Copies of ≈ student handout 2.5, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and 2.6, the European Convention on Human Rights, are provided at this point.)

Instructions:

- There should be silence throughout the exercise – hence the name of the exercise, the “wall of silence”. It is a discussion in writing.
- Each student may write as much as he/she wants.
- Minimum requirement: two entries, each on two different “walls of silence”.
- Students can write their answer to the key question or comment on what another student has written. Arrows, lines and symbols can be used.
- The students can walk around, or stay at one poster.

10. This method is a variation of Exercise 7.1, “The wall of silence”, in *Teaching democracy*, EDC/HRE Volume VI, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2008, p. 62.

Step 1.2: The students write their ideas on the “walls of silence”.

The students carry out the reflection exercise as they have been instructed. The teacher follows the exchange of ideas and opinions unfolding on the flipcharts, but does not take part. The teacher insists that the rule of silence be strictly observed by all.

This phase lasts for 10-15 minutes.

Stage 2: Follow-up discussion

The teacher calls the students to take their seats (circle of chairs or in an open square) and announces the next phase: the follow-up discussion, chaired by the teacher.

First the students should agree on the topics they wish to discuss. The teacher makes them aware of the need to make a choice in the time available. This would suggest focusing on one or two “walls of silence” rather than commenting briefly on each, but this is for the students to decide.

Such a discussion is a piece of constructivist learning. The teacher cannot, and need not, anticipate what the students will say. The teacher’s task is to give structure to the students’ contributions.¹¹

Stage 3: Feedback (“flashlight” round)

The teacher announces the end of the discussion so that a final round of feedback on the unit can be held. The method consists of a round of “flashlight” statements. Each student completes the following statement:

“The most interesting or important thing that I have learnt in this unit is ...”

In turn, each student makes a brief statement of 1-2 sentences. No comments are allowed. The students are free to repeat and emphasise each other’s statements.

The feedback supports the students in building up a piece of sustainable learning. The teacher receives information with which to evaluate the unit. Both students and teacher can draw on ideas for planning their future work in EDC/HRE (links to other units, extensions).

11. See the chapter in the introduction on constructivist learning.

Materials for teachers 3A

Four basic political standpoints



The liberal standpoint: individual freedom first

- Key principles: personal freedom and responsibility.
- Protection of human and civil rights.
- Free trade and competition as the driving force of progress, modernisation and increasing welfare.
- Capitalism works best if left alone.
- A strong state – but one that confines itself to the rule of law.
- Generous social security benefits make people lazy.
- Personal effort and success must pay – don't tax income and profits too heavily.

Slogan: "No risk, no freedom".



The social democrat standpoint: equality first

- Key principles: equality, solidarity, social security.
- Protection of the weak, the poor, the less privileged.
- Unless it is controlled, capitalism will deepen the social divide. There is no alternative to capitalism, but its effects need to be controlled and corrected by political means.
- We need a system of social security to care for families, invalids, the sick, the old, the unemployed, and the poor.
- Solidarity means that the strong support those in need.

Slogan: "United we stand – divided we fall".



The conservative standpoint: security first

- Key principles: security and stability.
- A strong state is important to protect the country from dangers and threats.
- A strong state rests on a modern, efficient economy.
- The deepening of the social divide should be avoided.
- The family needs special protection.
- Citizens should only ask for support if they cannot cope with their problems themselves.

Slogan: "A strong state in a healthy economy".



The green standpoint: natural environment first

- Key principles: protection of the natural environment, responsibility for future generations.
- Our present way of life, geared to economic growth and fossil fuel consumption, is a serious threat to our future.
- International agreements are necessary to protect the environment on a global level.
- We carry responsibility for future generations, and for the whole planet.
- Small changes in our everyday lives can make a difference.

Slogan: "You can't eat money".

Materials for teachers 3B

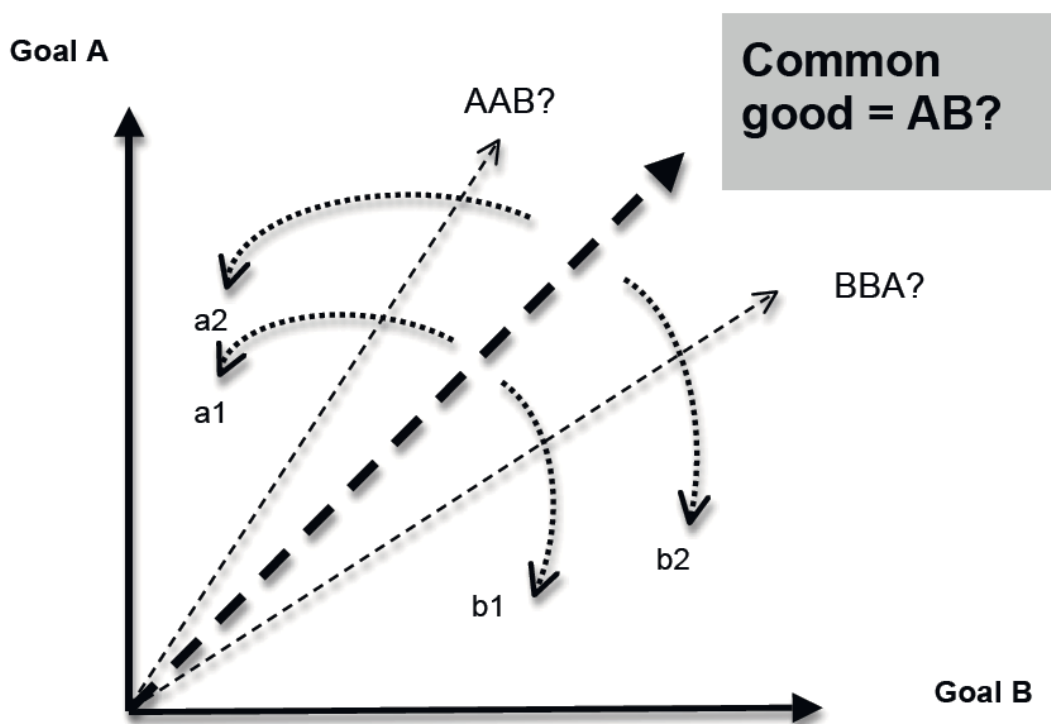
Lecture: what is the common good?

This draft describes the basic guidelines of analysis. The teacher should adapt the lecture to the students' learning needs and the context of the unit.

In democracies, it is understood that no one knows for sure what the common good is, and we therefore have to decide together what we consider to be best for our community. In dictatorships, the regime decides what the common good is – this is one of the big differences between democracy and dictatorship.¹²

Anyone can, and does, take part in this ongoing discussion: political parties, interest groups, the media, politicians, and individual citizens. Essentially, this is what taking part in democracy is all about – debating and finally deciding what is best for the country (or the world), and how to achieve this goal.

This unit is designed as a greatly simplified model of this decision-making process. You began by suggesting your individual ideas on the common good – when you think about your priorities if you were the leader of this country, you are thinking about the common good. Now you are in the middle of forming parties.



In the next lesson, you will negotiate with each other to find out if you can form a majority that defines the common good – for the time being.

This diagram shows what happens in such a decision-making process. Suppose that there are two basic goals under discussion, goal A and goal B (these can be linked to concrete goals that the parties have presented). The three dotted arrows indicate the final choices that the parties advocate – some would like to give priority to goal A (variant AAB), others to goal B (variant BBA). These are different ideas of compromise. Each party stands for a certain agenda that supports certain group interests in society, and it offers to take the interests of the other side into consideration.

12. See *see* student handout 3.6 for a more detailed treatment of this point.

The parties therefore try to influence decision making in their direction – a1 and a2 in favour of goal AAB, with the parties b1 and b2 pulling in the opposite direction (BBA).

What option is the best in terms of the common good: AAB or BBA? Or is it perhaps a balance more in the middle: AB? A decision must be made. The parties negotiate, and try to find a compromise that they can agree on, and therefore support together. In democracies, compromise is the price to pay for power. The power to decide rests with the majority. The minority, or individuals, can influence the decision by good reasoning.

Decisions made in this way are permanently subjected to critical review. The decision may not serve the common good after all. Conditions may change. Majorities may change. The majority may be convinced by good reasoning to change their minds. A democratic community is a learning community.

Extension (this part can be given separately)

How is all this linked to the key concepts of this unit – **diversity** and **pluralism**?

By exercising their freedom of thought and expression, individual citizens create a widely **diverse** spectrum of individual opinions on what is best for the country. Citizens who are interested in seeing their goals turned into practice form or join organisations such as parties, interest groups, etc. This is organised **pluralism** (see a1, a2, b1, b2 in the diagram).

Pluralism generates competition for power and political influence. A decision requires some goals and interests to be prioritised, while others are rejected. A compromise is sometimes necessary to achieve a sufficient majority.

Citizens who do not take part in this game by articulating their interests and views loudly and clearly will find themselves left out. It is in everybody's interest to take part in democracy.

Materials for teachers 3C

Suggestions for extensions and follow-ups

1. How do parties reflect social cleavages?

✍ Student handout 3.5 and discussion

- What cleavages exist in our society?
- How do the parties in our country reflect these cleavages?
- What decisions and compromises have been made?

2. Pluralism

- What interest groups and NGOs are present in politics?
- Which interests are well organised? Which are not?

3. Compromise

In democracies, pluralism generates the necessity for compromise. Different views are held on this:

1. From the individual player's point of view: compromise is the price to pay for power. Good ideas are watered down to a second best solution.
 2. From a general point of view: pluralism generates competition; the players keep each other in check and ensure that none of them becomes too powerful. Pluralism in society has the same effect as checks and balances do in a constitution.
 3. Viewed from the output perspective: pluralism generates the necessity to compromise. Decisions that go to extremes are rare. This supports social cohesion.
- Which of these views are confirmed by a reality check in your country, e.g. a case study?

4. Comparing democracy and dictatorship

✍ Student handout 3.4

- How do democracies and dictatorships handle diverse interests and views?
- What decisions are made? (Criteria for comparison: inclusion of interests, efficiency, articulation of criticism, role of the media.)

5. The two dimensions of politics

Max Weber:¹³

1. "Politics may be compared to slowly and strongly boring holes through thick planks, both with passion and good judgment."
 2. "Whoever is active in politics strives for power."
- How did we experience the two dimensions of politics in this unit?
 - How do political actors balance these two dimensions in our country?

13. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", pp. 2, 34 (www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/ethos/Weber-vocation.pdf); quotations edited by the author.