

## 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. <span style="float: right;">25 min</span>
	Stage 2: The students analyse their decisions. <span style="float: right;">15 min</span>

#### 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 decisions<sup>8</sup>

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 president<sup>9</sup> of this country.

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

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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.