

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.