UNIT 6
GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Upper secondary level

The policy cycle model
How does a democratic community solve its problems?

Unit 6
Government and politics
The policy cycle model

Introduction for teachers

The two dimensions of politics

Politics, according to Max Weber's classic definition, has two dimensions: on the one hand, it is a quest and struggle for power, and on the other hand it is a slow and strong "boring (of) holes through thick planks, both with passion and good judgment."[15] The metaphor stands for the attempt to solve political problems. Such problems need to be dealt with, as they are both urgent and affect society as a whole, and are therefore complex and difficult.

This unit focuses on how this "boring (of) holes through thick planks" takes place, and how citizens who want to take part in democracy can play their part in deciding what problems deserve priority, and how they should best be solved.

The policy cycle model

The students learn how to use a tool to describe and understand political decision-making processes – the model of the policy cycle (see ✍ student handout 6.1). Politics is understood as a process of defining problems, and then debating, choosing and implementing solutions. Public opinion and reactions by those persons and groups whose interests are affected show whether the solutions will serve their purpose and be accepted. If the attempt to solve a problem has succeeded, the policy cycle comes to an end (policy termination); if it fails, the cycle begins anew. In some cases, a solution to one problem creates new problems that now must be dealt with in a new policy cycle.

The policy cycle model emphasises important aspects of political decision making in democratic systems:

– a heuristic (constructivist) concept of political problems and the common good;

– competitive agenda setting; in pluralist societies, political arguments are often linked to interests;

– political decision making as a process of collective learning; the absence of omniscient players (such as leaders or parties with salvation ideologies);

– a strong influence of public opinion and media coverage; the opportunity for citizens and interest groups to intervene and participate.

How the model works – what it shows, and what it omits

The policy cycle is a model – a design that works like a map in geography. It shows a lot, and delivers logic of understanding. Therefore models are frequently used in both education and science, because without models we would understand very little in our complex world.

---

15. Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf* [Politics as a vocation], Reclam: Stuttgart, 1997, p. 82. (My translation, P.K.)

The manual for students contains materials that are designed as models:

✍ student handouts:

– 1.2 Three options that shape our futures;

– 3.4 How does a democratic political system handle diversity and pluralism?

– 3.5 The concept of the common good;

– 3.6 Map of social cleavages and political parties.

We never mistake a map for the landscape it stands for – a map shows a lot, but only because it omits a lot. A map that showed everything would be too complicated for anyone to understand. The same holds true for models such as the policy cycle. This model should also not be mistaken for reality. It focuses on the process of political decision making – "the slow boring of thick planks" – but pays less attention to the second dimension of politics, the quest and struggle for power and influence.[16]

In democratic systems, the two dimensions of politics are linked: political decision makers wrestle with difficult problems, and they wrestle with each other as political opponents. In the policy cycle model, the stage of agenda setting shows how both these dimensions go together. To establish one's understanding of a political problem on the agenda is a matter of power and influence.

Here is an example. One group claims, "Taxation is too high, as it deters investors," while the second argues, "Taxation is too low, as education and social security is underfunded." There are interests and basic political outlooks behind each definition of the taxation problem, and the solutions implied point in opposite directions: reduce taxation for the higher income groups – or raise it. The first problem definition is neo-liberal, the second is social democrat (see ✍ student handout 3.6).

Citizens should be aware of both. The policy cycle model is a tool that helps citizens to identify and judge political decision makers' efforts to solve society's problems.

The learning potential in using the cycle model

The unit's potential for competence development includes the following:

Competences of analysis and judgment:

– The students are trained to become active users of media information.

– They develop a keener eye for debates on agenda setting, and different stages of political decision making.

– The students appreciate the negotiation of compromises between different interests (heuristic concept of political problems and the common good).

Competences of political participation:

The students are able to identify the phases in a political decision-making process during which they can intervene and exercise influence (stages before and after the decision).

Didactic framework of the unit

The students are introduced to the policy cycle model as a tool, and they apply it in a research project task. In the last lesson they share and reflect on their findings and their work in the project. The first lesson provides an advance organiser that highlights a key element of the policy cycle – the issue of setting the political agenda. The students will understand the model better after having experienced the simulation of an agenda-setting debate in class. The unit allows for a high level of student activity.

---

16. Compare 🗎 materials for teachers 6.2.

The unit offers the tool to develop the analysis of political decision-making processes, but provides no case study material. This makes it possible, but also necessary, for the teacher and/or the students to select a suitable topic. Criteria for choosing a case study topic include: relevance, comprehensibility, availability of media coverage. A current case will be covered by the initial phases in the policy cycle model, but media coverage is more easily accessible. On the other hand, a case from the past also gives insight into the implementation history and the assessment of the solutions to a problem. The constitutional, legal and institutional framework should also be considered.

An optional feedback session is recommended to evaluate the learning outcome and utilise the learning potential that student feedback offers – both for students and teachers. However, a fifth lesson needs to be set aside for this.

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 6 (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 6?

How this matrix can be used

Teachers can use this matrix as a tool for planning their EDC/HRE classes in different 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, analysing a problem, judging the effect of rules, exploring the importance of personal responsibility.

– The matrix helps teachers make use of the synergy effects that help the students to be trained in important competences repeatedly, in different contexts that are linked in many ways. In this case the teacher selects and combines several units.

Units	Dimensions of competence development			Attitudes and values
	Political analysis and judgment	Methods and skills	Political decision making and action	
6 Government and politics	Public argument and negotiation: exercise of human rights, essence of democratic decision making	Criteria for selecting information	Strategic approach to intervening in decision-making processes	Appreciation of negotiation and competition of interests
3 Diversity and pluralism	Pluralism Competition of interests Negotiation of the common good Two dimensions of politics	Making brief statements	Negotiating compromises and agreeing on a temporary concept of the common good	Mutual recognition
4 Conflict	Concept of a political problem		Identifying a problem, attempting to find a solution	
5 Rules and law	Importance of a shared appreciation of the institutional framework, including the political culture, in democratic systems		Designing an institutional framework for peaceful decision-making processes	Appreciation of fairness in bargaining for compromises

8 Liberty	Arguing	Speaking in public	Promoting ideas and interests in public	Appreciation of non-violent means of conflict resolution
9 The media	Agenda setting and gatekeeping through the media and media users	Deconstruction of information transformed through media Criteria for selecting information	Adopting the gatekeeping perspective of the media: defining political problems	

UNIT 6: Government and politics – The policy cycle model
How does a democratic community solve its problems?

Lesson topic	Competence training/learning objectives	Student tasks	Materials and resources	Method
Lesson 1 "Our most urgent problem is ..."	Judgment: making a choice, giving reasons. Participation: mutual recognition of personal experience, interests and values. A political problem is an issue, not a fact.	The students carry out a discussion on political agenda setting.	Flipcharts and markers in assorted colours, scotch tape.	"Wall of silence" – group work. Presentations and discussion.
Lesson 2 Politics – how a democratic community solves its problems	Working with a model. Politics serves to solve problems that affect the community.	The students apply the policy cycle model to concrete examples of their choice (research task).	✍ Student handouts 6.1 and 6.2. Flipcharts and markers. Newspapers.	Lecture. Group work.
Lesson 3 Applying the policy cycle model (research task)	Analysis and judgment: Describing and judging a process of political decision making. Understanding the policy cycle model.	The students apply the policy cycle model to a concrete issue.	✍ Student handouts 6.1 and 6.2. Newspapers.	Project work.
Lesson 4 How can we take part?	Methods: giving, and listening to, presentations. Participation: identifying opportunities for political participation. A model serves as a tool to analyse part of a complex whole.	The students brief each other on their results. The students reflect on the product and process of their work.	✍ Student handout 6.2, with students' notes.	Open space presentations. Plenary discussion.

| Lesson 5

Feedback session (optional) | Reflecting on one's personal process of learning and competence development.

Giving constructive feedback.

Reflecting on the class's and teacher's joint responsibility for the success of EDC/HRE classes. | The students reflect on their work (learning outcome and process of learning). | ✍ Student handout 6.3 (student feedback).

Flipcharts with markers in different colours.

One flipchart with a big copy of ✍ student handout 6.3. | Individual work, plenary presentation and discussion. |

Lesson 1
"Our most urgent problem is ..."
A discussion on political agenda setting

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	Judgment: making a choice, giving reasons. Participation: mutual recognition of personal experience, interests and values.
Learning objective	A political problem is an issue, not a fact. It is urgent, requiring action. It affects the community. As many different interests, ideologies and values are involved, it is an issue whether a problem should be admitted to the political agenda. In a democracy, the citizens participating in such debates exercise their freedom of thought and expression. The media also strongly influence agenda setting (freedom of the press).
Student tasks	The students carry out a discussion on political agenda setting.
Materials and resources	Flipchart and markers in assorted colours, scotch tape.
Method	The "wall of silence" – group work. Presentations and discussion.
Time budget	1. The wall of silence. 15 min
	2. Presentations. 10 min
	3. Reflection; introduction to research task. 15 min

Information box

The "wall of silence" is a brainstorming method that supports students who are less extrovert or wish to take some time to think carefully before saying something. Working in silence helps the students to concentrate, and their statements will become more interesting and meaningful. The "wall of silence" is an example of the paradox that a strict framework of rules supports liberty rather than obstructing it. The students act in the role of experts; they cannot give a "wrong" answer to the key question.

The students simulate a public debate on political agenda setting in the classroom. Their experience helps them to understand the policy cycle model better, as the agenda-setting debate is the first phase in the policy cycle model.

They deliver material that they can study more extensively in the research task (lessons 2 and 3). The constructivist approach corresponds to the constructivist method of defining and solving political problems in democracies, as it is modelled by the policy cycle.

Lesson description

1. The "wall of silence"[17]

The students form groups of five. Each group is seated in a semicircle facing a flipchart fixed to the wall. Each group has two or three markers in different colours. They work in silence. Within the time limit of 10 minutes, each student makes a minimum contribution of one statement. He or she completes the sentence:

> "In my opinion, our most urgent problem is ..."

The students respond to sentences or words already written down, and they may write as much and as often as they want. The group is given a second sheet of flipchart paper if required. The students may also link statements, using arrows or lines and symbols like question or exclamation marks. Their poster will provide a record of their discussion.

The teacher follows the discussion from a distance. He/she does not intervene or take part in the silent debate, but rather makes sure that the rules – particularly working in silence – are observed by the students.

2. Presentation

After the time limit for writing on the poster has expired, the posters should be visible for all students. The students assemble around the posters in two big semicircles. Taking turns, the groups present their posters to the class. Each student has chosen a sentence he/she has not written and reads it to the class, followed by a brief explanation for this choice. Quite often the students focus on one or two statements. No discussion should take place before all students from all groups have spoken.

The teacher collects the students' statements under general headings in a chart on the blackboard or flipchart, depending on the students' inputs. Here is an example:

Our most urgent problem is ...				
Economy	Security	Environment	Society	...
Fight unemployment More jobs for young people ...	Car accidents ...	Reduce CO_2 emissions ...	Improve schools Support for young women ...	...

The teacher can hand this job over to a student. The presenters and the class participate in choosing new categories and deciding where to put which entry.

3. Reflection

The "wall of silence" simulates political agenda setting. So what has priority in the students' opinion? Can the class agree on a problem that deserves priority? The chart helps the students to answer this question. It shows whether the students emphasise issues under a particular category, and if the entries can be linked (see economy in the example above).

But the students may not be willing to agree on one issue. But must they? This is a question worth thinking about.

---

17. Source: *Teaching Democracy*, EDC/HRE, Volume VI, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg 2008, Exercise 7.1, p. 62.

On the one hand, they live in a free country. They are free to choose whichever issue they consider important and promote it in public. On the other hand, resources are scarce – this is not only a question of taxpayers' money and funds, but also one of time and energy, and last but not least, public attention. Many people can only cope with a very limited number of issues at a time, and tend to lose interest quickly; some media serve and increase the tendency towards a "one-issue agenda".

The students may also feel that this process of agenda setting is unfair or even "stupid", as the issues they consider really important fail to receive the attention they deserve. Who corrects these "wrong" decisions?

The answer is – the students themselves, if they think something should be done. In a way, they are forming parties that have different goals and values ("ideologies"), which are permanent protagonists in agenda-setting debates (e.g. workers, environmentalists, minority rights activists).

This discussion opens an interesting path to understanding what purpose parties serve. See the suggestion for an extended research task at the end of this chapter.

4. Research task

But once this has been said, the students can follow their own path of interest. The teacher informs the class that they will have the opportunity to study in detail an issue of their choice. To prepare the research task, the students should therefore collect material from print or electronic media on the issue of their choice. They should not only look for agenda-setting debates, but collect all the information they can find on decisions being made or implemented, statistical data, statements by political parties, lobbies, NGOs, etc.

Lesson 2
Politics – how a democratic community solves its problems
The policy cycle model

	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: working with a model.
Learning objective	Politics serves to solve problems that affect the community.
Student tasks	The students apply the policy cycle model to concrete examples of their choice.
Materials and resources	Flipcharts and markers. Newspapers. ✍ Student handouts 6.1 and 6.2.
Method	Lecture, group work.

Time budget	1. Lecture and follow-up questions.	15 min
	2. Setting up groups for the research task.	10 min
	3. Research task.	15 min

1. Lecture and follow-up questions

The teacher introduces the policy cycle model to the students. They have an understanding of the initial phase in the cycle, the agenda setting, and are ready for the question of what happens once a problem has attracted public attention.

The teacher gives a brief lecture that fits into this context (linking instruction to constructivist learning). The students will apply the information in an extensive follow-up research task. The teacher distributes ✍ student handouts 6.1 and 6.2 before the lecture begins. Both materials should be displayed on a flipchart or overhead transparency for the teacher to refer to during the presentation.

An abstract model is easier to understand if it is linked to a concrete example. This works best if the teacher picks up an issue that the students have addressed in the lesson before. Alternatively, the teacher can use a case story, even a fictitious one, and prepare this beforehand. For the purpose of demonstration, the introductory lecture is outlined here on the issue of reducing car accidents (see lesson 1, chart of students' statements).

Before going into detail the listeners should have the complete picture in broad terms. The students look at ✍ student handout 6.1. The teacher's explanation includes the following points:

– This diagram is a model of a political decision-making process. It shows the different stages within such a process. The process begins at the top – the *debate* on what is to be considered as "the *problem*". This is the agenda-setting debate we looked at in the previous lesson. Once a problem has made it onto the agenda, the debate on the right solution begins.

– The outcome of this debate is a *decision* – a law, for example, or some kind of action.

- This decision is then *implemented* – it is put into action. Now it takes effect. A new law is applied, for example, or a new hospital is built.

- People will soon form their *opinion*. Do they agree with this decision once they experience its impact? Does it serve their interests, for example?

- Sooner or later, there will be some *reactions*. These can be friendly or critical comments in the media, statements by politicians, or protests.

- These reactions may lead to a *new debate* on what *problems* should be put onto the political agenda. Perhaps some people think the original problem was never solved, and perhaps things have got worse. Or the measures taken have had side effects, leading to new problems. Politics takes place in cycles: some issues must be dealt with permanently, and some solutions need to be improved. So the cycle indicates that politics is a very practical business, following the principle of trial and error.

- But it is also possible that the process *comes to an end* (policy termination). Perhaps the decision worked well and the problem was solved – or a problem does not receive enough attention to warrant further political efforts.

The students may ask questions on points they had difficulty in understanding. The teacher should consider which questions are better dealt with right away, and which can be answered when introducing the example.

In a second step, the teacher gives an example to illustrate the model. There is a considerable amount of repetition, which supports clarity and understanding. The categories are linked to key questions and details. ✍ Student handout 6.2 supports the lecture.

To give an example, a fictitious case story is used. It draws on the example given in lesson 1 – the issue of reducing car accidents (see 📑 materials for teachers 6.1, which is based on ✍ student handout 6.2).

The students ask further questions if necessary, and the teacher can now pass these questions on to the class. In this way, the teacher finds out whether the class has understood the message of the lecture. The students may be struck by the amount of argument and discussion, and the "egoistic" way in which the protagonists promote their particular interests. The teacher points out that this – arguing for one's interests – is essential in democracy. Only by making one's views heard is there a chance of them being considered in the decisions that are taken. And in some cases, a compromise is found.

2. Setting up groups for the research task

The discussion need not be taken further. There will be time for this in the last lesson. The teacher now decides with the students which issues they want to study. The material that they have collected serves as a guideline – which issues are under discussion? What decisions have been made in the more recent past?

The students form groups of two to four. They should have their presentations ready for the fourth lesson. They should present their results on ✍ student handout 6.2, which will be copied for sharing with the class.

The students need criteria for choosing an issue:

- *Access to information*: in current processes of decision making, the students will find plenty of information in newspapers and on the Internet. On the other hand, as the cycle is incomplete, they will only be able to cover the first phases, e.g. up to the decision or implementation. A pragmatic approach is therefore to look through the last few weeks' newspapers and pick up what hit the political agenda.

- *Personal interest*: the students choose an issue that they consider to be particularly urgent. They may refer to the "wall of silence" in the first lesson. But they should realise that access to information may prove more difficult.

3. Research task

The students spend the rest of lesson 2 and the whole of lesson 3 on their research. They plan their work independently.

Lesson 3
Applying the policy cycle model
Research task

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	Methods: project work. Political analysis and judgment: describing and judging a process of political decision making. Participation and action: responsibility, exercising liberty.
Learning objective	The students understand the policy cycle model and can apply it to any piece of information on political decision making.
Student tasks	The students apply the policy cyle model to a concrete issue.
Materials and resources	✍ Student handouts 6.1 and 6.2. Newspapers.
Method	Project work.
Time budget	1. Group work. 35 min
	2. Debriefing. 5 min

This lesson is devoted to group work. The students work independently, and they are responsible for their work. They are therefore expected to collect all the information they need.

The teacher may choose to support the groups by supplying some sources of information, e.g. statistics, school textbooks, copies of the constitution, or access to the Internet.

The teacher watches the students at work; their strengths and weaknesses in working without the teacher's guidance – as they will have to after leaving school – indicate their needs in skills training.

The teacher calls the students to attend a short debriefing round in the plenary session. The teacher and students plan the presentations in the following lesson; if a group has not finished, it is the students' responsibility to find a solution to the problem.

First, the group should explain why they feel they are not "finished". Do they have additional information they have not read yet? Or are they dissatisfied with the scarce amount of information that was available?

The most preferable option is to leave the problem as the group's responsibility. This sounds tough, but it resembles reality in adult life. The learning opportunities for the students outweigh the faults in their presentation. A feedback after the four lessons is necessary, and sufficient time must be allowed for this. An alternative solution would be to give the students an additional lesson. This option is more suitable if the majority of the students have not finished their work.

Lesson 4
How can we take part?
The policy cycle as a tool for political participation

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	Methods: giving, and listening to, presentations. Participation: identifying opportunities for political participation.
Learning objective	A model serves as a tool to analyse part of a complex whole. Politics has two sides: the solution of problems and the struggle for power. The policy cycle model focuses on the first aspect.
Student tasks	The students brief each other on their results. The students reflect on the product and process of their work.
Materials and resources	✍ Student handout 6.2, with students' notes.
Method	Open space presentations, plenary discussion.
Time budget	1. Student presentations. 15 min
	2. Discussion and reflection. 25 min

Lesson description

1. Student presentations

The lesson begins with the students' inputs. The groups sit at tables arranged around the wall, leaving an open space in the middle. Each group appoints two team speakers who take turns in representing their groups. This allows all students to visit the other groups and be given a briefing on their results.

This decentralised arrangement allows many students to become active simultaneously. No student will have a complete picture in the end. This would take considerably longer, and the amount of information would be too large to remember.

The teacher joins the students and listens, rather than asking questions or commenting.

2. Discussion and reflection

The students assemble in the plenary. They are seated in a circle or a U-form so that they face each other.

First the students and the teacher must agree on the agenda. The teacher suggests focusing on the policy cycle model rather than the issues that the students have studied, and the students should agree before the lesson proceeds as is suggested here.

The teacher asks an open question and then gives the floor to the students:

"What worked well when you applied
the policy cycle model to a concrete example and what didn't?"

The students respond as experts, drawing on their experience in the research task. They may report on technical problems, such as obtaining information or lack of time. They may refer to analytical difficulties, for example, deciding which stage a particular event belongs to: agenda setting, debate on decisions, or reaction to the outcome of a decision. They may have some thoughts about the model itself, questioning whether it accurately depicts reality.

It is not necessary to comment on and answer each point raised by the students, but of course the students and teacher are free to do so, and plan their time accordingly.

There are at least three key statements on the policy cycle model that are worth thinking about (see 📄 materials for teachers 6.2). The teacher should not necessarily deliver the whole set; this is one option among others. A statement may be useful to respond to the students' comments. Otherwise the teacher selects one or more, as a brief input to conclude the discussion.

Lesson 5
Feedback session (optional)

	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	Reflecting on one's personal process of learning and competence development.
	Giving constructive feedback.
	Reflecting on the class's and teacher's joint responsibility for the success of EDC/HRE classes.
Learning objective	Feedback is an important tool to improve processes of teaching and learning.
Student tasks	The students reflect on their work (learning outcome and process of learning).
Materials and resources	✍ Student handout 6.3 (student feedback).
	Flipcharts with markers in different colours.
	One flipchart with a big copy of ✍ student handout 6.3.
Method	Individual work, plenary presentation and discussion.
Time budget	1. Individual feedback.	7 min
	2. Plenary presentation of feedback results.	13 min
	3. Follow-up discussion.	20 min

Information for the teacher

This unit has been selected as one of two examples in this manual[18] to demonstrate how a feedback session may be used to evaluate a unit. This feedback session is optional, but also strongly recommended.

The students give feedback on their work in the project – now focusing on the process of teaching and learning. What difficulties were there, what went well? Which skills do they possess, and what would they like to develop further?

A feedback session is a useful tool to evaluate the impact of EDC/HRE classes by comparing the students' views with each other's and with the teacher's. Feedback requires time, but the investment brings rewards, as the working atmosphere and efficiency of lesson planning may be expected to improve. The feedback session consists of an information input (steps 1 and 2, and a follow-up discussion (step 3).

---

18. See ✍ student handout 5.6 (for units 4 and 5).

Lesson description

The following procedure is suggested for students who are not familiar with giving feedback. An alternative procedure for classes and teachers with some feedback experience is given below.

1. Individual feedback

The flipchart copy has been attached to the wall or blackboard where all students can see it well. The teacher explains the purpose of the lesson: the students will not deal with a new topic, but will step aside, so to speak, and view the results and their process of learning. They should answer the questions honestly and fairly on the handouts they will receive. They need not give their names.

In the follow-up discussion, the class and the teacher will look at the feedback information to find out how they can improve the learning outcome in EDC/HRE classes together – by keeping what went well, and changing what did not work so well.

The students each receive a copy of ✍ student handout 6.3. The teacher points out that the students should not look at each other's handouts – this is not a test with a set of expected answers.

Part 1 of the handout consists of eight statements on different aspects of teaching and learning – the policy cycle tool, the methods of teaching and learning, co-operation and interaction with other students and with the teacher. These questions are answered by entering a dot on the dartboard – a dot in the centre (No. 5) means "I fully agree", and a dot in the outer circle (No. 1) means "I fully disagree".

In the second part, the students may enter their personal "highlight" and "flop" – what was the most interesting and important thing – and therefore worth remembering – that they learnt in this unit? And what was particularly uninteresting, unproductive, or boring – and what will they therefore forget quickly?

2. Plenary presentation of feedback results

The students work in silence. A team of two students collects the worksheets and brings them to the flipchart. One student reads out the dartboard results from each handout, and the other enters them on the big copy of the dartboard on the flipchart. A student can work out the exact total score by adding the scores in each sector and dividing them by the number of students taking part.

The personal feedbacks (part 2) are also read out and entered on two big flipcharts to the left and right of the dartboard, each carrying a title that refers to the feedback question – e.g. what I found particularly interesting/uninteresting.

An alternative procedure

This procedure is time-consuming, but will make it easier for those students for whom this is the first feedback exercise. A more direct method can be applied if:

– the students have some feedback experience;

– (more important) they can trust the teacher not to sanction open criticism, e.g. by giving bad marks or personal verbal attacks;

– (still more important) the students can trust each other to respect each other's differing opinions and learning experiences.

Step 1: In turn, the students come to the flipchart and enter their points directly on the poster. They do not fill in ✍ student handout 6.3. Instead, the students receive red and green strips of paper (white paper marked accordingly will do as well), and enter their personal feedback statements. These are then collected and presented by a tandem team of students. Preferably, the students come forward themselves and read out their statements, commenting on them if they wish.

These strips are attached to the flipcharts, and clustered if they repeat a certain point. Subtitles and keywords give structure to the feedback chart.

Basic rule during feedback input: no commenting, no discussions

Whichever approach is adopted, one basic rule applies: no statements are commented on during the input phase. It may disrupt the time schedule if a premature discussion starts, and the principle of equal opportunity for all is ignored. The teacher chairs the input phase and intervenes if students comment, laugh or deride any statement by other students.

3. Follow-up discussion

A feedback session generates its own agenda, so no advice on how to structure content can be given. Here are some starting points to help the class read the main feedback messages.

Dartboard:

– What questions show a dominant cluster of agreement or disagreement? Why?

– What questions show a spread right across from one extreme to the other? Why?

Personal feedbacks:

– Are there any clusters – statements repeatedly made?

The follow-up discussion may address points like the following:

– What are the strengths of our EDC/HRE classes? Should we continue in the way we have done up to now?

– What are the weaknesses of our EDC/HRE classes? What should we change or improve? In what way?

(The following questions can also be included in an extension to ✍ student handout 6.3).

– What is my personal responsibility? What can I personally contribute to our success?

– What would I – as an individual student – like to learn next? What tasks interest me, or help me most?

The students and teacher decide – perhaps even jointly – what results from their feedback session are to be taken further in future lesson planning. One of the most important things that the students – and perhaps also the teacher – should understand is that teacher and students depend on each other to be successful, as professionals and as learners respectively.

📑 Materials for teachers 6.1
Illustration of the policy cycle model – how can we reduce the number of car accidents?

Concepts and key questions	Notes
0. Topic What is the issue?	How can we reduce the number of car accidents?
1. Problem Who sets the agenda? What is the problem? Do all protagonists agree in their definition of the problem?	Minister of the Interior: more accidents. Young drivers – inexperienced, reckless. Males of all ages – too much alcohol. Motorists' club: more cars on the road; taxes not used for improving road network. Environmentalists: CO_2-emissions rising, oil supplies running out and becoming more expensive – support alternatives to car transport.
2. Debate Who is involved? What are the protagonists' interests and values?	Everyone agrees on reducing car accidents. But there are different interests and goals involved in the debate: Minister wants to put pressure on reckless drivers. Motorists want better conditions for car drivers. Environmentalists are worried about global warming.
3. Decision What is the outcome? Have certain interests been given priority – or is it a compromise decision?	The government decides to introduce two bills: Heavier fines for speeding, lower alcohol limits; more traffic controls. Four-lane highways are to be standard within five years.
4. Implementation How is the decision implemented? Who is involved or responsible? Are there problems or conflicts?	More traffic controls, particularly in the evenings and at weekends. Highway extension and improvement scheme is scheduled, first roads under construction.
5. Opinions Which individuals, protagonists, groups, etc. support or criticise the outcome? What are their values, ideologies and interests?	Motorists welcome construction scheme, question controls (more fines – more funds?) Environmentalists deeply disappointed. Demonstrations in the capital. Discussion: found a new green party?
6. Reactions How do they react? (Individually, collectively) What are their means of exercising power and pressure?	Environmentalists hold demonstrations in the capital. Discussion: found a new green party? Truck drivers complain of delays on highways. Minister reports 15% drop in accident figures within 12 months – maintains that success proves his policy right.

7. New problem *or* **Policy termination** Does a new debate begin on setting the political agenda? Is it the same problem or a new one that is under discussion? *Or* has the decision led to a solution that ends the process?	Minister: no new steps need to be taken. Observe development, discuss situation in 12 months. Environmentalists: alarming rise in CO_2 emissions. Complaints by beer brewers: sales drop by 10%. Jobs at stake. Industry demands speeding up of road construction scheme. …

🗐 Materials for teachers 6.2
Key statements on the policy cycle model

1. Politics has two sides: the solution of problems and the struggle for power. The policy cycle as a model focuses on the first aspect – the solution of problems. The aspect of power is included too, in the way agenda setting depends on the pressure a protagonist can produce. But the main concern of the model is to describe the practical side of politics – in the words of Max Weber, "slowly and strongly boring holes through thick planks, both with passion and good judgment." That means that the propaganda efforts in the competition for the voters' support – including personal criticism against political opponents, populism and scandalising – may distort the picture, but are filtered out by this model.

2. This model delivers an interesting view on the concept of the common good. In a democracy, no protagonist knows what is good for everyone – this is the big difference between democracy and dictatorship. Rather, we must find out together, negotiate and bargain, argue and finally compromise. If we are wrong, or the solution was unfair, we will soon know, and have to try again. An open society requires a pragmatic, constructivist approach to answering the question on the common good.

3. Maps, like the policy cycle, are models. They show some aspects of reality clearly, but can do so only by leaving out others. The policy cycle model can serve as a map to answer the question of at what stage we as citizens can intervene and make ourselves heard. If we are not a member of parliament or government, we will not take part in the debate on which decision is to be taken – this is the **output** side of the political system. But the other stages map out the **input** side, and here we can become active. We can comment on a decision, support it or protest against it, and we can certainly participate in debates on political agenda setting. Political problems are not just there, but need to be defined and acknowledged as such (see topic of lesson 4).