



New methods

Discussions with politicians? No problem!

Description of the method

This method is a role play, which allows the participants to learn about how to discuss with politicians, lobby for their interests and find argumentation strategies for their demands.

Target group

Youth Group, School class, group of young interested persons

Number of participants

4-6 participants, 1-2 trainers (this exercise can also be done with a bigger group, constituted by several subgroups, follow the instructions like this for every subgroup)

Environment

One classroom/ big room, some chairs, for preparation phase it is also good to have some small rooms where the groupwork can take place

Time needed

Approx. time: 1,5 hours

Materials

Chairs, flipcharts, pen, paper

Objective/aim of the method

The aim of the methodology is to formulate and work on youth demands and trying out the scenario of a discussion with politicians. The young participants will take part in a role game in order to defend their interests, discuss their demands and present them in front of each other.

Some participants will be activists, some will be politicians.

Before starting: warm up your group with an energizer/small game.

Make sure to well welcome your participants and engage them from the beginning on in a creative way. Ice-breaking games should give the space to get to know each other, warm up a little and take pressure away.

Step by step instructions

Idea for an ice-breaker: **Negative Thought Shower:** The group leader raises the question: **“What do we need in this world to make the world a worse place / to make the world collapse?”** and collects all the ideas on a flipchart. Then you turn the ideas around: **“What do we need to make the world a better place?”** Discuss the ideas and let the youth rank the most important ones. Tell the group to keep those scenarios in their minds while doing the actual exercise.

Step by step instructions

Start the role play:

Step 1.

Defining the roles & topic. (15 minutes)

The group is divided into two groups. One group is playing politicians, one group is playing activists. Either the group leader already prepares a topic (e.g. food waste regulation in supermarkets, how to stop fast fashion etc.) or the group can choose an issue. If you have already worked with your group on a particular topic, it is a nice exercise to try out the learned content in an interactive way. Try to find a specific topic with political demands and not a too broad topic.

Step 2. (15 minutes)

Activist Group: Collecting data on the chosen issues.

The activist group has 15 minutes to do research on their chosen topic and find some data which underlines their issue and formulate one main demand.

Politicians Group: Research about chosen politicians.

The politicians have to do a research on their politicians and their political argumentation. The politician/political party can either be chosen by the youth or assigned by the group leader.

As group leader make sure to visit both groups and ask if they need help.

Step 3.

Prepare the discussion.

Prepare the room you are in. It is convenient to either have a half-circle with the discussion participants or have the discussion around a table. The audience (if there is any) should see well the faces of all discussion participants.

Step 4.

Start the discussion. (15-20 minutes)

One designed activist will start by introducing why the activist group came to talk to the decision-makers and formulate their demands. Let the discussion begin! Politicians and activists will react to what the other party says and present their own opinions. Encourage the team to really play their role!

Step 5.

End the discussions and find a solution/roadmap to the demands. (5 minutes)

The decisions-makers as they have a tight schedule will try to end the meeting, activists should make sure that before the end there is a roadmap (how to follow-up on this issue) and a new meeting planned.

Step 6.

Get out of the roles.

Everybody in the room stands up, jumps a little and together a loud "aaaaah" is shouted in order to get out of the roles.

Step by step instructions

Step 7. (10 minutes)

Feedback circle.

Make a small feedback circle where all participants can share the emotions they felt during the exercise.

Encourage the youth to really take over their roles. It is more fun, when all participants really start acting!

Tips for the trainer

The group leader has to lead the discussion and make sure that the tone always stays respectful and that all participants have the time to speak up. If you are working with an experienced group in discussion also one of the participants can take the role of the moderator.

Extra Tip: For making this exercise even more fun, you can include the audience as question-askers. Either they ask questions spontaneously or the group leader prepares questions, which he hands out just before the discussion.

Any other comment on the method

This method is a really good preparation exercise before having a real discussion/lobbying meeting with politicians.

