

Petal Debate

Method	Petal Debate
Introduction	
<p>This methodology facilitates decision taking by developing in small group and plenary a “compelling argument “ and a constructive debate.</p> <p>The goal of this method is that students learn to argue and to convince each other of something. Ideally, this method leads to a supported decision.</p> <p>Students prepare by elaborating the subject and arguments in small groups based upon a certain question or wicked problem. Each group appoints an ambassador. These ambassadors discuss the arguments adopted by their group and try to convince each other of the value of their arguments. The other students observe and note their concerns, questions, critical viewpoints, etc. Thereafter the ambassador goes back to his/her small group and they discuss the newly presented arguments and decide their point of view. Subsequently the ambassadors gather again.</p> <p>Practicing and observing go hand in hand in this method which is very powerful.</p> <p>For students it is important that they know a lot about the topic of the question or wicked problem so that the discussion gets to a deeper level.</p>	
Aim	To process and deepen comprehension of newly learned subject content.
Target group:	Different disciplines, specifically subject areas where students need to learn decision-making skills in group settings in order to act / improve / give advice
Intended learning outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject knowledge, understanding and strategies in dealing with heterogeneity and diversity in groups are reinforced, accommodating multiple perspectives and views on a specific subject. • Students learn how to build a “compelling argument “, to bring together and express a variety of different points of view, ideas and reactions to a topic. • Students develop the communication skills of active listening and the capacity for clear expression. • Students learn how to express their own point of view and to present collective opinion in plenary. • Students learn the value of collective knowledge. 	
Description	
<p>Prepare the classroom for group discussions of 4/5 students around a table. Each single discussion group is called a ‘petal’</p> <p>Choose the subject topic / challenge / decision to be taken</p>	

Write a question / wicked problem on a chart on each table

Give the instruction:

- students have to define a stand, a proposition, a solution in their petals
- students should appoint an “ambassador” to go to the table with other petal ambassadors to argue their position.
- in preparation, students elaborate carefully the arguments by tapping into the acquired content of a subject, considering opposing arguments, difficult questions. They must come up with concrete ideas, solutions, and possible changes to make this proposition acceptable for everyone around their table. Students take notes (main ideas, core concepts, connections, ...) of this preparation on a chart.

The table “ambassador” then comes to the flower’s centre and for a period of 15 minutes, they share and debate their idea/proposition. The other students listen actively and they can note their reaction, ideas and amendments or new propositions. The centre can try to find a common proposition with concrete changes. If the proposition is not shared, ambassadors go back to their “petal” they negotiate their proposition, people are more open to reach consent or even consensus because they know clearly the process with other ambassadors. Sometimes, a third round is needed to refine the stand/proposition/opinion.

The teaching staff member visualises the centre debate with words, drawings, ...

It can be an open ending after two or three rounds: the staff member can make notes of the debates and come to a conclusion with the last centre debate. In some cases nevertheless it could be interesting to give the instruction that a decision needs to be taken that has the consent of the whole classroom. The ambassadors might need to go back twice or three times to their petals to adapt and nuance their opinion/proposition.

Preparation	<p>Time is needed to decide topics and to set up the training room:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to arrange tables in circle, they are petals of one flower and at the centre there are chairs (same number as tables) • to post colourful paper to visualize different topics and keywords in the petals • to arrange a paperboard for drawing and writing the main ideas of the centre discussion.
Required resources and equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A big training room • Questions or wicked problems on different charts • More chairs than students • Colourful paper • Paperboard • Notebooks for students • Furniture set up for group work.
Success factors	<p>Clear communication is required for this method to be successful, i.e. focus on giving opinion, being present, keeping it short, being aware of interrupting (the last part of a message</p>

	often contains important information), asking people how their messages are connected to what has been said before, speaking in first person singular (not third, or 'we', or others) and directly.
Advantages	Students can practice debating in small groups. Only the ones who are comfortable with it can show their debating skills for the whole group. The other ones can learn a lot by observing.
Disadvantages	Debating can be difficult for students and has to be learned in many cases. It might be very helpful to make students confident first with debating skills to avoid this being a disadvantage.
Additional information	<p>It can be really interesting to add graphic facilitation/visual support during the debate in the centre to collect and highlight ideas in drawings.</p> <p>In this prezi you can find a brief summary of the method 'Petal Debate'.</p> <p>In this link you can find '5 tips to properly argue your point'.</p>