

## Method: Petal debate

In UCLL, Els Verlinden has been trying out the method of Petal debate during a history lesson on 'Democracy in Athens (5th century B.C.) and today' During this lesson, students took part in a debate on the current state of democracy in Belgium.

### 1. Intended learning outcomes

- Students understand how democracy in Belgium works.
- Students can analyze the democratic and non-democratic characteristics of Belgian democracy.
- Students are able to form an opinion on the different propositions concerning democracy in Belgium.
- Students are able to express their opinion in a correct and well-mannered way.
- Students are able to defend their opinion by using correct and relevant arguments.
- Students get to know a method for organising a debate in class.

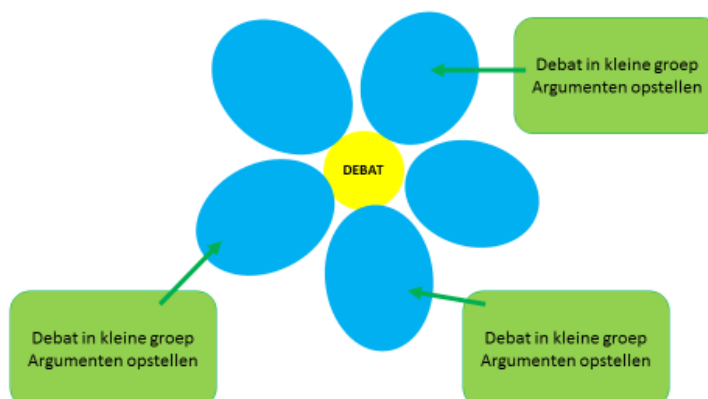
### 2. Teaching / learning activities

- STEP 1. Preparation/homework: students get a list of propositions concerning democracy in Belgium. They have to read these propositions at home and search for arguments pro and against (regardless their own opinion). To conclude, they have to form their own opinion on each proposition. If needed, they can also consult a text on Belgian democracy.
- STEP 2. At the start of the lesson, students are divided in four groups (of four students each). These small groups are called 'petals'. The instruction is given.

### Discussie/klasgesprek

- Groepen van 4
  - Pro en contra argumenten opstellen
- STEP 3. The first proposition is discussed in the small groups/'petals'. Students formulate arguments pro and against, different opinions are discussed. Each 'petal' has to come to a shared opinion.
  - STEP 4. Each 'petal' delegates one group member to the 'heart of the flower' as a representative. The representatives discuss the proposition, they each defend the opinion of their group, they give relevant arguments.

### *Petal debate*



- STEP 5. The representatives try to come to a shared opinion.
- STEP 3-5 are repeated. Each time, another representative is sent to the 'heart of the flower'.

### 3. Conclusions that we reached about this method

- It was clear that good organisation and instruction is crucial. By visualizing the organisation and the different steps, students knew what to do during each step/phase.
- By giving the propositions beforehand, each student was forced to form an opinion on the propositions. Most of the students entered the classroom well prepared. This meant that every student had to be able to take part in the debate. Thanks to this preparation, the formulated arguments were more relevant, more well-thought out, more profound.
- Students who didn't do their homework, were clearly insufficiently prepared. In future, it would be an idea to decline participation to the lesson to students who didn't prepare properly or to give them an alternative exercise during the debate.
- Two of the intended learning outcomes were "Students are able to express their opinion in a correct and well-mannered way" and "Students are able to defend their opinion by using correct and relevant arguments". To attain these goals, I explicitly stated the rules. Students sometimes had to be reminded of the rules.

## *Regels petal debate*

### **BLOEMBLAD/PETAL**

- Je verzamelt argumenten pro en contra.
- Je probeert tot een gedeelde visie te komen.

### **HART VAN DE BLOEM**

- Je vertegenwoordigt jouw groep.
- Je verdedigt de opinie van jouw groep, niet je persoonlijke opinie.

- Coming to a shared conclusion in the 'heart of the flower' appeared to be the hardest part. It would be worth trying to identify an independent moderator amongst the students to lead the debate and to formulate a shared conclusion.

[Go to Petal Debate Method](#)