



## **REFLECTION TOOLS FOR TEACHER QUALITY**

### **Title**

ROLE DEBATES

### **Goal**

The goal of this reflection tool is to stimulate understanding of the perspectives of different stakeholders.

More specifically it helps teachers, principals, stakeholders, policy makers, educators, etc. to explore a specific issue (e.g. *the concept of multicultural education in the context of a national or European plan for inclusive education*), to have a sense of different aspects and perspectives by different stakeholders in the local and the school community, and in the classroom.

In the role debate the participants discuss their points of view and use arguments and counter-arguments, negotiate and finally try to reach a consensus, based on a shared understanding of the concerns of all stakeholders involved.

The tool is creative, collaborative and stimulates “out-of-the-box” thinking.

### **Target group**

The target group for this tool can vary. It can be used with teachers, teacher educators, student teachers, headmasters and policy makers (and also in mixed groups) both in an institutional, national or international setting.

The group involved should have a minimum of 8 and maximum of 30 participants.

### **Summary/description**

The reflection tool involves a discussion on a controversial issue, where different stakeholders have different perspectives and concerns. In many such cases a group focuses on their own concerns and little attention is given to the concerns and perspectives of other stakeholders. In the role debate, the participants are stimulated into taking different perspectives and to understand the concerns of other groups. This is done by a debate in which the participants have different roles and change these roles during the debate.

Finally the group tries to reach a consensus taking all the different perspectives and concerns into account.

*As an example the tool is described using the theme of multicultural education: We are in an area where there are a good number of minorities (racial, cultural, ethnic, etc.) The national authorities in cooperation with local authorities have*



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*decided to hold a meeting with the local teachers, principals and stakeholders to discuss the opening of a New Cross-cultural School. In this scenario two or more stakeholder groups are identified having different positions (e.g. teachers and ministry or teachers and parents, etc.).*

### Methodology

Phase 1: As an appetizer, the participants are asked “*What makes a School Multicultural?*”, giving some benchmarks for maintaining an effective Multicultural School. They are asked to list important considerations from different perspectives (State, teachers, parents, etc.) (see example).

After the presentation of their points of view, key elements are identified and discussed. It is important to keep the perspective as broad as possible. Therefore, the facilitator can verify that as many different perspectives as possible are used. The facilitator will direct the participants to arrange answers in five different groups that have reference to: **Perspectives, Policies, Programs, Personnel, Practices.**

Phase 2: The group is divided in two subgroups, each representing a specific group of stakeholders (*e.g. parents and teachers*). Each group is responsible for the development of arguments for or against the “Establishment of a New Cross-cultural School”, getting information from the lists (*e.g. parents might be afraid that a multicultural school is a source for cultural tensions between groups of pupils, that their children will adopt (bad) habits and views from other cultures, smart children will get less learning opportunities, ... while the group of teachers stress idealistic motives that children will learn to understand, accept and tolerate peers for other cultural backgrounds*). Each subgroup sits down and discusses their points of view and arguments they want to use in the debate. Then the two subgroups sit down facing each other and each member of a group starts debating with his opponent in front of him, trying to convince the other. After some time (10 minutes) the facilitator stops the debate and tells everybody to change chairs with his opponent (and maybe move one seat to the left so you will have a new partner) and start debating again, but now with the opponents role (surprise!).

Phase 3: After the end of second phase the group has a break, discussing the arguments each side of the group have used and the underlying concerns, trying to create understanding of each others positions and concerns. Then a third discussion round can be held, where each pair starts discussing the issue again, but now focussed on reaching consensus and a shared solution that takes into account all concerns and positions.



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### Variations

- 1 The method can be also used within students in teacher education and pupils, but also within extensive long-life education including parents, etc.
- 2 The role-play teaching method can also be carried out by teachers focussing on their own school and in teaching their own subject matter.
- 3 Phase 1 could be done as a whole group activity, or in separate stakeholder groups, so both groups do not know each others arguments beforehand.
- 4 If little time is available, the stakeholder groups could be started by providing them with a sheet of background information with arguments that their group could use (see example).
- 5 The debate can be extended by using more than two perspectives: e.g. teachers pro and teacher con, local politicians (pro and con), schoolleaders, pupils/students, ...

### Background/resources

The debate can be used as a reflection and learning tool in education in a variety of contexts. It is not only fun but also provides an opportunity to learn about the subject under discussion, leading to the development of communication skills and social skills.

The method combines a rich variety of activities: group work, discussion, analysis, presentation, reflection and critical evaluation.

The methodology is described in a variety of resources:

- Websites with Debate resources and tools or lesson plan:  
<http://www.idebate.org/teaching/classroom.php>  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20040310110236/http://jawbone.clarkston.wednet.edu/websites/lincoln/staff/Rosetti/laonline/Guides/debate.htm>  
[http://web.archive.org/web/20040216045043/www.ash.udel.edu/ash/tutor/writing/comp\\_defs/argument\\_def.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20040216045043/www.ash.udel.edu/ash/tutor/writing/comp_defs/argument_def.html)  
[http://www.education-world.com/a\\_lesson/03/lp304-02.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/03/lp304-02.shtml)  
[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson304b.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson304b.shtml)
- Teacher guidelines for a debate teaching strategy in a variety of papers:  
“Using Taking Sides: Approaching the Classroom with Taking Sides”  
<http://www.Dushkin.com/usings/guide/method4.mhtml>  
“A Game Theoretic Approach to the Pragmatic of Debate: An Expository Note” (Glazer J. and Rubinstein A.)  
<http://arielrubinstein.tau.ac.il/papers/71.pdf>  
“Role-play or debate to promote students’ argumentation and justification on an issue in animal transgenesis” (Simonneaux L.)  
<http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=1166776>



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- “Stakeholder Role Play/Debate: Virginia Key Beach (Miami, FL)  
[http://www.rsmas.miami.edu/groups/niehs/ambient/teacher/env\\_justice/module%20segments/20AudbonKeyVirginiaDebateRolePlay.pdf](http://www.rsmas.miami.edu/groups/niehs/ambient/teacher/env_justice/module%20segments/20AudbonKeyVirginiaDebateRolePlay.pdf)
- See also projects about Debate Game:  
“The Debate Game – a mixed reality tool for urban planning”  
<http://www.cavi.dk/projects/debategame.php>
  - Websites about Role play (general)  
<http://www.roleplay.org>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/role\\_playing\\_game](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/role_playing_game)  
<http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/handbook/games>
  - Some interesting websites and papers on the subject “Multicultural Education/School” include:  
<http://www.intime.uni.edu/multiculture/school/benchmarks.htm>  
<http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/papers/caleb/multicultural.html>  
<http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/multicultural/hanley.htm>

### Conditions

With this reflection tool, two conditions are very important:

- Time: The role play game (debate) process should be given enough time for all three phases. Phase 1 will take 30 – 60 minutes, phase 2 will take 30 to 45 minutes, phase 3 will take 30 minutes.
- Involvement and ownership: It is necessary that the participants have good prior knowledge about the issue that is going to be discussed by the participants and share the feeling that the topic is relevant.
- Information: The participants need to have access to information about stakeholders’ opinions and arguments. Otherwise, the participants are just inventing arguments. If there is enough time (e.g, when the activity can be spread over two sessions), the participants could be given the task to search for information to elaborate their roles and to enrich their arguments.
- Quality of the facilitator: The debate role-playing process requires for a facilitator who has experience with the role play method and can initially organize the participants into groups representing a particular debate or role playing point of view. The facilitator should support the groups to express their points of view, and that each group member is actively involved in all phases of the process and keeps to the time limits.



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### **Materials**

- PC and data projector for an introductory presentation on the specific theme that is chosen
- Whiteboard or flip-overs for capturing the results of the discussions
- Examples of suitable debate topics could be found in the dilemmas of the Game of Consequence.
- Space where two groups can sit facing each other, e.g. by lining up the two groups facing each other.

### **Strength and weaknesses**

#### *Strengths:*

The Debate games are excellent formats for group discussion and are easily adapted to situations where “teachers” are responsible for discussion groups outside the standard classroom lecture.

It is also a method for discussing sensitive topics, where the participants can feel safe as they are playing a ‘role’.

The role-play/debate can clarify the underlying values and mental models of the participants.

Moreover, the method is fun.

#### *Weaknesses:*



## **APPENDIX**

### **Example of arguments with respect to multicultural education**

#### **For**

- Because society (and the neighborhood) are multicultural, the school should assist students from different cultures to communicate and cooperate in a more systematic way and create a 'model environment'.
- The education refers to all children and should not refer just to minority children, so this should not be an issue.
- Parents from different racial, ethnic and cultural background can cooperate with the local organizations in order to combat prejudice and racism.
- Teachers help students to develop positive attitudes toward different racial, ethnic and cultural groups
- Teachers facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups.
- Teachers use new curricular approaches to develop positive interethnic relations and new educational material which depict the variety of ethnic, racial and cultural group within the country
- Students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural groups experience equality and equal status.

#### **Against**

- The number of local/native students in a class should be substantial so that the immigrants are forced to assimilate in the dominant culture. For this reason a quota should be imposed on the number of immigrants.
- The fact that certain pupils may not have a proper command of the official language may have a negative impact on the performance of the rest students.
- Native students can be stigmatized because they have graduated from schools that have a large number of students with minority background.
- Most of the students of diverse groups have an increased chance of failing because they do not share the dominant ideology of the national educational system
- Some students are very shy about their culture because they don't feel dominant and other students make them feel inferior. That's why sometimes they are hostile and there is bullying in schools.
- Teachers have not the proper preparation to manage a multicultural class and they don't feel comfortable to apply new teaching practices that actually effect changes in education and society.



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