

College Politics – a role-playing game

Context

This activity was preceded by some work based on the Student Union elections focusing on questions such as its role, purpose as well as the advantages of having a SU. This is a good way into raising awareness of the political process and branching into wider issues concerning political literacy.

Learning objectives – students will:

- have an understanding of aspects of the political process in a college setting
- gain further experience of putting forward views about how to improve the college
- be prepared to take on roles and argue a case in the role play to follow

Method

The activity can be split into two parts if there is not enough time in one session. The whole thing including preparatory work, the role-play itself and a plenary session will take about an hour and a half.

Preparatory work – 45 minutes

- i) Explain the purpose of the activity, the scenario and the possible roles and their objectives (OHT).
- ii) Put students into four main groups and allocate them a role each (see role sheet). Up to two students can take the role of the Deputy Principal and will chair the meeting.
- iii) Each group needs to prepare their arguments for why they should be given the £2 million grant. They also need to think about possible allies from the other groups. Make sure they have written up their arguments into a series of points. Each group should nominate a spokesperson.
- iv) The students who will be the Deputy Principal/Chair will need to think about how they chair the meeting and what the protocol will be. They can also decide whether they are going to have a hidden agenda and favour one of the groups and steer the meeting accordingly.

Role-play – 20-30 minutes

- i) Set the room up so that it resembles a formal meeting. The Deputy Principal/Chair should explain how the meeting will be run and what its objective is i.e. to decide who should get the £2 million grant. Only one group/role can be allocated this money and they will effectively 'win' the game.

- ii) Each group puts forward their case in turn. They should also be given the opportunity to question/challenge each other's arguments and make alliances if appropriate.
- iii) Each group must then cast a vote to eliminate another group. The one with the most votes is then eliminated but can still vote in the next round. They will need to think about whom, out of the groups left, is more likely to take their interests into account, even though they are out of the running.
- iv) There will then be another round of questions/discussions before the next round of voting. This carries on until there is one group left who will then be allocated the grant. If there is a tie the Deputy Principal will have the final say.

Plenary – 10 minutes

Follow up the role-play with a short discussion around the following issues:

- Why did the group that won win the support of the others? What was persuasive about their arguments?
- How well did you argue your own case?
- How well did you perform your role? Is there anything you would do differently?
- Were you happy with the result? (touch on the democratic process here, having a voice/say etc.)
- What does being 'political' mean?
- How does this activity show that College life can also be political i.e. that politics is not just about mainstream political parties and the Houses of Parliament.