

DARE

Depolarisation Activism for
Resilient Europe

DARE to Care: DEBATE EDUCATION

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DARE to Care: Debate Education

Background (about the DARE project)

The 'DARE - Depolarization Activism for Resilient Europe' initiative was created to inspire a critical learning space and youth-led and action-oriented dialogue about various contemporary challenges such as polarisation, radicalisation, mental health, human rights violations. The DARE educational materials seek to strengthen active citizenship and European values and promote and amplify youth voices and civic engagement.

For more information, please visit the project website: www.depolarisation.eu

Lesson Themes

- DARE to Care theme - an insight into a young person's motivation and commitment to volunteering for a particular cause and through doing so, serving one's community;
- Debate as an addition to formal education - one young person's community service in the form of helping university and high school students develop public speaking, argumentation and critical thinking skills

Context

In many countries, the framework of the traditional educational system does not emphasize the development of critical thinking, public speaking and argumentation skills. All of the above-mentioned skills are crucial for developing a democratic society in which people are able to articulate their opinions, critically evaluate policies, navigate the polarised media scene and be active citizens.

Formal academic debate is an entertaining and engaging, most often extracurricular peer-to-peer activity that addresses all of these issues and builds critical thinking skills.

Goals

- To promote academic debate as a form of non-formal education;
- To raise awareness about the necessity of developing skills like argumentation and public speaking;
- To interest students in taking part in debate activities.

Learning Outcomes

It is expected that as a result of the class, the students will be able to:

- Understand and explain what academic debate is;
- Demonstrate basic competence in argumentation by analysing someone else's or articulating one's own argument.

Material and Equipment Needed

Laptop; beamer/projector; speakers; internet/wi-fi; flip-chart papers and markers for group work activity

Duration

45 minutes

Overview of Lesson Activities

Introduction (5 minutes)

The instructor starts the lesson by asking students to define in their words what is debate. After that, the instructor asks students if they can explain what is not debate. As they are explaining, the instructor encourages the students to give real-life examples of both definitions.

Short DARE to Care video clip viewing (5 minutes)

Play the video clip for the students: depolarisation.eu/debate

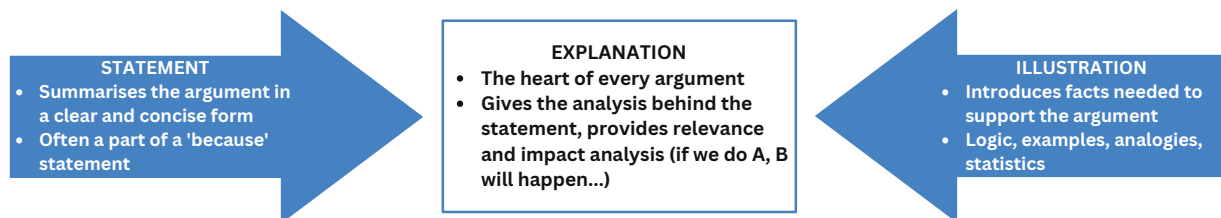
A brief discussion about the video clip (15 minutes)

Useful exploratory and follow-up reflection questions:

- Would you change the "what debate is/not" definitions now?
- What do you think - is debate important? What is its relevance in a democratic society?
- Feel free to open the floor for student questions - do they have any questions about the video they just watched?

A brief explanation of the main components of an argument (5 minutes)

The instructor, before dividing the students into smaller groups, briefly explains the main components of a good argument: statement, explanation & illustration.



"Pro and Con" - Group Work Activity (20 minutes)

Randomly assign the students into six groups (ideally, 4 students per group though more or fewer also works). Each group should have one piece of flipchart paper and markers, to prepare their presentation.

Take the debate motions listed on the next page (or come up with your own debatable statements). Each group should get one debate motion. Give the groups 10 minutes to discuss their motions and to come up with 1 argument that supports the motion and 1 that opposes it. Each argument should have a developed structure as described above (statement, explanation, and illustration).

Facilitate the presentation of each group's results (2 min per group), allowing other groups to ask questions, offer suggestions and feedback.

Sample debate motions (debatable statements) - feel free to add your own:

- COVID-19 vaccines should be mandatory
- Social media should not be free of charge
- Modern literature (i.e. Harry Potter, Lord of the rings, Game of Thrones) should replace classical literature (i.e. Romeo and Juliet, Anna Karenina, Divine Comedy) in the school curriculum
- Violent activism is justified to achieve ecological goals
- School uniforms should be mandatory
- Euthanasia should be legal
- Marijuana should be legalised
- Product testing on animals should be banned
- Social media is harmful to mental health

Sources

- DARE project, documentation and videos can be found on the project website: www.depolarisation.eu or www.resilienteuropa.eu
- More debate motions and debate instruction materials can be found on the website of the International Debate Education Association (IDEA): <https://idebate.net/>

Activity Adaption for Online Implementation

This activity can be implemented fully as a class-based discussion online, without group work, by simply debating one of the motions in a plenary discussion with the whole class.

Assessment and Evaluation Options

Rather than grading students' debating skills, as this would be premature after a single classroom debate experience, we suggest a group self-reflection exercise as a form of assessment. Sit with everyone in a circle and do an oral evaluation of the classroom debate experience. Invite each participant to say how they felt during the debate, what was interesting, what was hard, and whether they would like to continue practicing debate.

Homework Ideas

- Split students into groups of two and give each group one debate motion / debatable statement. One person should research the theme and write three arguments with a developed structure IN FAVOR of the motion and the other person AGAINST it.
- Have each student choose a topic that they find interesting, or have strong feelings about, and assign them the task of preparing a 5-minutes long persuasive speech, arguing their opinion in front of their classmates. (While this is an individual assignment, if it were a group debate, this would be the opening speech, i.e. Prime Minister's speech.) After delivering the speech, the classmates and the instructor can ask some points of information, or questions, trying to expose the weaknesses in the argumentation. The student would then need to respond to these questions, on the spot.