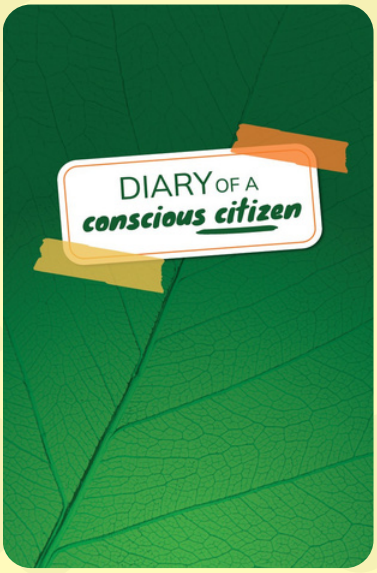
Escape Rooms for Green Entrepreneurship

PEDAGOGICAL SEQUENCE

Diary of a conscious citizen



KEY TOPICS

Power | representation | inequality & inclusion

Target group: learners aged 16+
Duration: 4 - 5 sessions (approx. 45 - 60 minutes each)

Introduction

Democratic systems are built on the principle of equality, yet access to participation, influence and representation is not evenly distributed. Social, economic and structural factors shape who is heard, who decides and who remains excluded from decision-making processes.

This preparatory pedagogical sequence introduces learners to the core concepts of power, representation, inequality and inclusion within democratic societies. It prepares them to take part in the escape room "The Conscious Citizen", in which players encounter dilemmas related to voice, influence, responsibility and fairness in collective decision-making. As a result, learners will develop a foundational understanding of how power operates within democratic systems, how inequality can shape participation, and how inclusive processes can strengthen civic life.

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Escape Rooms for Green Entrepreneurship

Overview of the pedagogical sequence

SESSION	THEME	MAIN FOCUS	KEY METHODS
1	Power & Representation	Who decides and who is represented	Presentation, discussion, mapping
2	Inequality and participation	Structural exclusion	Case analysis, reflection
3	Inclusion and democratic fairness	Inclusive decision-making	Scenario work, model-building
4	Responsible influence and gameplay preparation	Synthesis & application	Discussion, review, preparation



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SESSION 1: Power and representation

Focus

Introduce the concept of power within democratic systems and explore how representation shapes decision-making.

Learning outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- Define power in a civic context
- Explain the concept of representation
- Identify formal and informal sources of influence
- Reflect on who holds decision-making power in society

Key concepts, definitions and examples

Power

The ability to influence decisions, shape agendas or control resources within a society.

Concrete example: Elected officials shaping legislation or media actors influencing public discourse.

Representation

The act of speaking or deciding on behalf of others within political or civic institutions.

Concrete example: Members of parliament representing constituents' interests.

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Formal and informal influence

Formal influence operates through official roles and institutions; informal influence operates through networks, media or social capital.
Concrete example: Policy-makers (formal) vs influential public figures (informal).
Learner example: A student with a large social media following may influence which issues classmates discuss, even without holding an official role.

Activities

- Introduction of key concepts through facilitator input
- Mapping exercise: Who makes decisions in our community?
- Discussion: Are all voices equally represented?
- Reflection on visible and invisible forms of power

Evaluation

Exit slip: Identify one formal and one informal source of power in society.

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SESSION 2: Inequality and participation barriers

Focus

Examine how structural inequalities affect participation and access to democratic processes.

Learning outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- Define structural inequality
- Identify barriers to civic participation
- Explain how socioeconomic factors influence representation
- Reflect on fairness in democratic access

Key concepts, definitions and examples

Structural inequality

Systemic disadvantages embedded in social, economic or political systems.

Concrete example: Limited access to education affecting political participation.

Participation barriers

Factors that prevent individuals or groups from engaging in civic processes.

Concrete example: Language barriers, lack of time, financial constraints.

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Democratic access

The degree to which citizens can meaningfully participate in decision-making.

Concrete example: Accessibility of voting procedures or public consultations.

Learner example: A student council meeting held during class time may technically be open to everyone, but students who cannot leave lessons may still be excluded from participating.

Activities

- Case analysis of hypothetical underrepresented groups
- Group discussion: Who is often excluded from decision-making?
- Barrier identification exercise
- Reflection: What makes participation fair?

Case analysis: Barriers to youth participation

Learners analyse a short scenario describing participation in a local decision-making process.

Scenario:

A city council organises a public consultation about a new transport plan. The consultation takes place through a formal meeting at city hall in the early evening. Information about the meeting is shared mainly through the municipality's website.

After the meeting, officials notice that most participants were older residents, while younger citizens, migrants and students were largely absent.

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Task

Learners identify possible barriers to participation in this situation.

Barrier identification exercise

Learners discuss barriers related to different aspects of democratic participation:

- Access to information - who receives information about the meeting?
- Time and availability - who is able to attend this meeting?
- Language and communication - is the information accessible to everyone?
- Institutional setting - does the formal meeting format discourage some groups?

Group discussion

Learners discuss:

- Which groups might be excluded from this process?
- What changes could make participation more inclusive?

Reflection

What conditions are necessary for participation to be fair and accessible in democratic processes?

Evaluation

Short written reflection: Why does inequality matter for democracy?

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SESSION 3: Inclusion and democratic fairness

Focus

Explore how inclusive decision-making processes can strengthen democratic legitimacy and outcomes.

Learning outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- Define inclusive governance
- Identify strategies to increase participation
- Explain why diversity strengthens decision-making
- Evaluate fairness in collective processes

Key concepts, definitions and examples

Inclusive governance

Decision-making processes that actively include diverse perspectives and stakeholders.
Concrete example: Youth councils advising local governments.

Learner example: When a school asks students from different year groups to help decide how a shared student area should be redesigned.

Democratic legitimacy

The perception that decisions are fair, representative and justified.

Concrete example: Public trust increasing when communities are consulted.

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Deliberation

Structured discussion aimed at reaching reasoned and balanced decisions.

Concrete example: Citizen assemblies discussing policy proposals.

Shared governance

A decision-making approach in which power and responsibility are shared among different stakeholders rather than concentrated in a single authority. Shared governance emphasizes collaboration, transparency and participation from multiple groups affected by a decision.

Concrete example: A university where students, faculty and administrators all participate in governing bodies that make decisions about policies and institutional priorities.

Tokenism

A superficial or symbolic effort to include individuals from underrepresented groups without giving them meaningful influence in decision-making. Tokenism may create the appearance of inclusion while real power and decisions remain concentrated elsewhere.

Concrete example: Inviting a young person or minority representative to participate in a committee or panel, but not giving them real opportunities to influence the final decision.

Learner example: A school invites one student to a meeting about student well-being but makes the final decision before the student has a chance to contribute.

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Activities

- Scenario exercise: Designing an inclusive decision-making process
- Model-building task: Characteristics of a fair democratic system
- Discussion on diversity and representation
- Reflection on inclusion vs tokenism

Scenario: Redesigning a public park

A city government plans to redesign a public park. The project will affect several groups, including families, elderly residents, young people, local businesses and environmental groups.

Task

Learners design a decision-making process that ensures fair representation of different groups.

They should consider:

- How will different groups be informed?
- How can citizens contribute their views?
- How can the final decision reflect diverse perspectives?

Reflection on inclusion vs tokenism

Learners discuss the difference between meaningful participation and symbolic representation?

Discussion prompts

- What makes participation genuinely inclusive?
- How can organisations avoid tokenism?
- Why might institutions sometimes rely on symbolic representation?

Evaluation

Group task: Propose one strategy to increase inclusion in a democratic process.

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SESSION 4: Responsible influence and gameplay preparation

Focus

Synthesize key concepts and prepare learners to apply their understanding of power and inclusion during the escape room.

Learning outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- Connect power structures to participation outcomes
- Identify inequalities within decision-making scenarios
- Apply inclusion principles during gameplay
- Reflect critically on fairness and representation

Key concepts, definitions and examples

Responsible influence

The ethical use of power to promote fairness and inclusion.

Concrete example: Leaders ensuring marginalized voices are heard.

Democratic accountability

Mechanisms that hold decision-makers responsible for their actions.

Concrete example: Transparent reporting or public oversight

Learner example: A student council explains how it spent its budget and gives students an opportunity to question or comment on the decisions.

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Activities

- Synthesis discussion linking power, inequality and inclusion
- Review of key vocabulary
- Explanation of how these dynamics may appear in the escape room
- Preparation for identifying fairness dilemmas during gameplay

Fairness dilemma exercise

Learners analyse short dilemmas related to representation and decision-making.

Example dilemma:
A school committee must decide how to spend funding for student activities. Most members support funding sports programs, while some students argue that arts and cultural activities should aslo be prioritised.

Discussion prompts:

- How can the decision-making process include different perspectives?
- What would be a fair way to reach a decision?

Evaluation

Short checklist quiz covering power, inequality and inclusion concepts.

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Checklist quiz: Power, inequality and democratic inclusion

Learners answer the following questions individually or in pairs. The quiz reviews key concepts introduced during the pedagogical sequence.

Questions

1. What does power mean in a civic context?

a) The ability to control economic markets
b) The ability to influence decisions or shape outcomes in society
c) The ability to organise public events

Correct answer: b

2. What is political representation?

a) When citizens speak directly in parliament
b) When individuals or institutions act on behalf of others in decision-making
c) When governments communicate with the media

Correct answer: b

3. What is structural inequality?

a) Temporary disagreements between political groups
b) Systemic disadvantages embedded in social, economic or political systems
c) Differences in personal opinions among citizens

Correct answer: b

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4. Which of the following can act as a barrier to democratic participation?

a) Access to clear information
b) Language barriers or lack of time
c) Public consultations organised by governments

Correct answer: b

5. What does inclusive governance aim to achieve?

a) Limiting participation to experts
b) Ensuring diverse perspectives are included in decision-making
c) Reducing the number of participants in political processes

Correct answer: b

6. What is democratic legitimacy?

a) When citizens perceive decisions as fair and representative
b) When governments make decisions quickly
c) When laws are written by experts only

Correct answer: a

7. What is tokenism?

a) Meaningful participation of all groups in decision-making
b) Symbolic inclusion without real influence or power
c) A democratic voting system

Correct answer: b

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8.What is shared governance?

a) A system where decision-making power is shared among different stakeholders

b) A system where decisions are made only by elected officials

c) A system where citizens vote on every issue directly

Correct answer: a

Facilitator note (optional)

Review the answers together and clarify any misunderstandings before learners begin the escape room activity.

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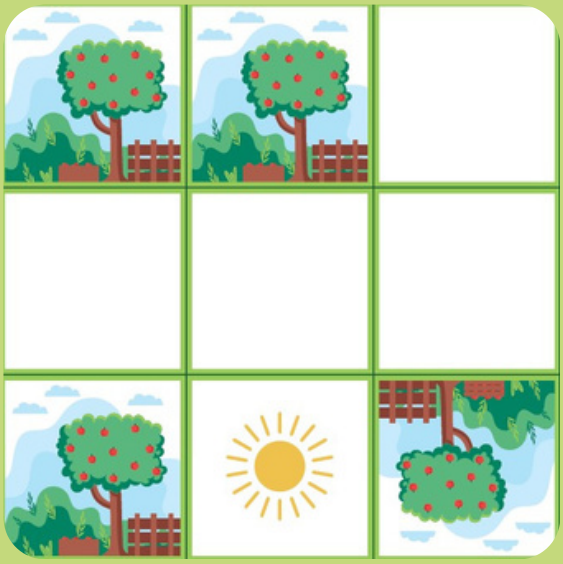

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