








Inclusive Decision-Making

Embracing every voice during sustainable decision-making

COLLABORATING | Inclusive Mindset and Intercultural Competence

→ What you will need:

-  7 - 49
-  Group workshop
-  10 mins preparation
-  1.25 - 1.5 hours execution
-  Handouts and flip chart or whiteboard

→ Related Tools:

-  [Deep Listening](#)

→ Menu:

- I. Overview
- II. Learning Activity
- III. Assessment
- IV. Key Advice
- V. References



“Overcome 'groupthink', unleash collective potential and empower all ideas. Explore the art of inclusive consensus, where every contribution is a step towards a richer, more democratic dialogue.

—Guido de Wilde





I. Overview

Inclusive Decision-Making introduces a transformative approach to group decision-making that respects and utilises the diverse perspectives within a group.

Rooted in the Lewis Method (Lewis, 2013), this tool equips students to guide team collaborations effectively, ensuring every voice is heard. The activity builds upon the principles of deep democracy, a strategy designed by Myrna and Greg Lewis as a method for group decision-making where both the majority and minority have control over the decision-making process.

Through interactive discussions and tailored exercises, students learn to navigate group dynamics, acknowledge minority viewpoints and work towards inclusive, sustainable decisions.

By recognising the pitfalls of 'groupthink' and hierarchy (Kramer, 2009), the activity aims to foster an environment where every idea is valued, and every student feels included. This proactive strategy not only enhances decision-making but also strengthens the group's collective potential, empowering students to contribute openly and constructively.

Learning outcome

- ✓ The student is able to apply an inclusive mindset and engage in democratic dialogue to facilitate decision-making processes





II. Learning Activity

Students explore why inclusive decision-making is important, understand mechanisms of groupthink and navigate through the decision-making process to ensure everyone's participation.



1. Assigning Group Facilitators 5 - 10 mins

Form groups of eight students. In each group, there are two key roles: the facilitator and the decision-makers.

The group will randomly appoint one member as the facilitator, who has a crucial role in guiding the decision-making process. Facilitators will choose one of the two fictitious scenarios and follow the hand out for the facilitators to ensure all steps are executed properly.

The facilitator provides the structure and supportive atmosphere for open dialogue and should actively ensure that every voice is heard, regardless of whether the opinion is popular or unique within the group. Meanwhile, the other seven members of the group will act as decision-makers. They bring varied ideas and viewpoints and are actively involved in brainstorming, discussing and voting on the final decision.

Tip: empower the facilitators to create a safe environment where all group members feel comfortable and encouraged to share their opinions honestly. This includes fostering a space where majority and minority opinions are respected and considered equally.





2. Collecting All Perspectives 15 mins

The facilitator chooses one of the two fictitious scenarios (listed in the handout). Each group is tasked with collaboratively making a group decision with a specified budget. As the facilitator explains, this budget must be spent entirely on one activity, donation or initiative, rather than on multiple separate activities, donations or initiatives or divided among various options. Both scenarios require the group to decide genuinely and vote on one specific and budget-realistic idea, instead of finding a compromise among multiple or unrealistic options.

The facilitator begins by allowing the group one minute for brainstorming, after which they invite the group members (in no specific order) to present their ideas for a single activity, donation or initiative and write the expressed ideas on a flip chart or whiteboard. The goal is for the group to write down a minimum of 5 or 6 ideas on a flip chart or whiteboard, ensuring a diverse range of options for consideration.

Tip: while it is ideal for each member to feel confident enough to suggest an idea, it is also acceptable if some members choose not to propose any ideas, aligning with others' suggestions instead.



3. Actively Searching for Alternatives 15 - 20 mins

The facilitator encourages the group to delve deeper into the group's decision-making process by actively seeking alternative and opposing viewpoints. To accomplish this, the facilitator will use the prompts designed to stimulate discussion on contrary ideas. This emphasises a welcoming and non-judgemental atmosphere, encouraging participants to share unconventional alternative viewpoints and invite contrary perspectives or divergent thoughts.

This step encourages group members to think creatively and challenge the status quo, ensuring that minority opinions are not only expressed, but also given sincere consideration. The aim is to uncover a diverse variety of viewpoints and ideas, especially those that may not align with the majority opinion, and to foster a deeper understanding



and exploration of all possible options.

The group is ready to move to the next step once they have added a minimum of 1 or 2 new and 'outside-the-box' ideas to the other ideas on the flip chart or whiteboard.



4. Consolidating Ideas and Making Decisions

🕒 20 - 25 mins

Once all ideas are proposed and listed, the facilitator guides the group through a structured decision-making process. It starts with one minute of personal and silent reflection, during which each person internally assesses and decides which ideas they support.

Next, the facilitator begins the first voting round. As the facilitator reads each idea from the flip chart or whiteboard, group members vote for their preferred option(s). Votes are cast openly by raising hands, allowing the facilitator to tally and visibly record these. Members can vote for more than one proposal, including their own, as long as they fully agree that the listed idea is an exciting and strong solution to the problem. If in doubt, members are advised not to vote for the idea.

In this round, the group identifies the most favoured idea, also known as the 'majority vote', based on the highest vote count. The facilitator notes the names of members who support this winning idea on the flip chart or whiteboard, ensuring transparency regarding individual preferences. As soon as there is a majority vote, the group can continue with the next step.

Tip: see instructions for when two or more ideas receive equal votes or when a unanimous decision emerges under Key Advice.



5. Integrating Minority Insights

🕒 20 - 25 mins

The facilitator fosters a dialogue that prioritises inclusivity and collaboration by engaging only with members who voted 'no' to the majority vote proposal, creating a space for them to voice their concerns and suggest possible enhancements. This process refines the winning idea by integrating the minority viewpoint, ensuring their perspectives are considered. Meanwhile, members who supported the original idea (the 'yes-voters') are



encouraged to listen actively, understanding the concerns and suggestions of the 'no-voters'. This fosters empathy and a deeper understanding within the group.

Using targeted prompts from the handout, the facilitator guides the 'no-voters' in identifying constructive additions to the majority vote idea. The focus here is on what can be added or tweaked to make the proposal more inclusive and appealing without changing its essence fundamentally, to create a version that can win the support of the entire group.

Once the 'no-voters' agree on an enhancement that makes the proposal more attractive, the facilitator arranges a new round of voting. The hope is that both the initial supporters (the 'yes-voters') and the 'no-voters' will unite in favour of this improved proposal. This process, which may involve negotiation and iterative modifications, is crucial for reaching a resolution that honours both majority and minority viewpoints. The facilitator's role in mediating these discussions is key to guiding the group towards a consensus that satisfies all members and aligns them with a collective vision.

After achieving a consensus that all members feel good about, a sense of shared ownership and mutual respect is fostered, demonstrating the group's dedication to inclusive, empathetic and collaborative decision-making.

Please note, as part of assessment *as learning*, students complete a self-assessment questionnaire and answer reflective questions. These questions not only support a one-time assessment of their current abilities but also function as a tool for ongoing feedback. This iterative process is aimed at enhancing and refining their listening skills through regular practice.

Tip: consider discussing the collaborative reflection questions, tailored to encourage critical thinking about their contributions and the dynamics of group decision-making, in a plenary setting in a following session. This will help students learn from different perspectives and roles.





III. Assessment

In a combination of self-assessment and collaborative reflection, students critically evaluate their skills in inclusive decision-making. The process is designed to foster self-awareness and promote continuous improvement in how decisions are made within a group setting.



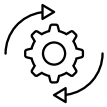
Purpose

Assessment *as* learning aims to strengthen the learning process and the development of metacognitive skills. It empowers students to direct their own learning and to become independent, critical self-assessors.



Roles

Self-assessment



Characteristics

Self-regulated learning



Materials

Self-assessment questionnaire and reflective questions





Assessment

Self-assessment questionnaire

Select what best describes your honest evaluation of your behaviour in the context of the group decision-making process:

Inclusivity of Perspectives

I ensure that every group member has an opportunity to voice their thoughts.

Rarely Most of the time

Encouraging Minority Voices

I actively seek out and encourage opinions that differ from the majority.

Rarely Most of the time

Openness to Alternatives

I remain open to and interested in alternative ideas and viewpoints.

Rarely Most of the time

Participating in Dialogue

I participate in discussions in a way that ensures diverse ideas are shared and understood by all.

Rarely Most of the time

Integration of Ideas

I strive to integrate the knowledge of the minority into the majority's decision.

Rarely Most of the time

Active Listening

I listen attentively when others express their ideas, without planning my response.

Rarely Most of the time





Suspending Judgment

I suspend judgment and remain neutral, especially when hearing opposing viewpoints.

Rarely Most of the time

Constructive Feedback

I provide constructive feedback that acknowledges others' contributions before adding my own ideas.

Rarely Most of the time

Non-verbal Encouragement

My non-verbal communication (eye contact, nods) supports and encourages others to share.

Rarely Most of the time

Consensus Building

I work towards building a consensus that respects both majority and minority opinions.

Rarely Most of the time





Assessment

Reflective questions for the facilitator

Write a 1–2-page reflection on your role in the inclusive decision-making process. In your reflection, answer the three main questions:

1. What went well?
Reflect on the strengths of your facilitation approach. Consider moments where your efforts to include all voices led to productive dialogue or meaningful insights.
2. What did you find challenging?
Identify the challenges you encountered. These could range from balancing diverse perspectives to managing conflicts or navigating your own biases.
3. How would you approach it next time?
Based on your reflections, propose actionable strategies to enhance your facilitation skills, particularly in fostering inclusivity and democratic engagement.

When writing your reflection, you can use the following topics and corresponding questions for inspiration:

- **Balancing Voices:** how effectively do you think you managed to ensure all group members felt heard? Reflect on the techniques you used and their impact.
- **Minority Perspectives:** discuss any difficulties you faced in ensuring minority perspectives were given due consideration. How did you or could you address these challenges?
- **Impact on Decision-Making:** evaluate the influence of your facilitation style on the group's decision-making process. Were there aspects that particularly helped or hindered the process?
- **Enhancing Inclusivity:** reflecting on the activity, identify specific actions you could take to improve the inclusivity and productivity of future discussions.
- **Biases and Preconceptions:** were you aware of your own biases and preconceptions? Discuss how you managed them during the facilitation and how this awareness affected your approach.





- Encouraging Participation: share the techniques you found most effective for encouraging quieter group members to participate. Why do you think these were successful?
- Evaluation of the Final Decision: how do you feel about the group's final decision? Reflect on whether it represented an integration of diverse perspectives and why.
- Applying Deep Democracy: looking forward, how do you plan to apply the principles of deep democracy in future group situations? Consider both within and outside educational settings.





Assessment

Reflective questions for members

Write a 1–2-page reflection on your role in the inclusive decision-making process. In your reflection, answer the three main questions:

1. What went well?
Reflect on the strengths of your facilitation approach. Consider moments where your efforts to include all voices led to productive dialogue or meaningful insights.
2. What did you find challenging?
Identify the challenges you encountered. These could range from balancing diverse perspectives to managing conflicts or navigating your own biases.
3. How would you approach it next time?
Based on your reflections, propose actionable strategies to enhance your facilitation skills, particularly in fostering inclusivity and democratic engagement.

When writing your reflection, you can use the following topics and corresponding questions for inspiration:

- **Active Participation:** reflect on how actively you engaged in the discussion. What factors influenced your level of participation? Consider both internal and external elements that may have played a role.
- **Voice and Hearing:** were there moments when you felt your voice was not adequately heard? If so, elaborate on what could have been done differently, both by others and yourself, to better facilitate your participation.
- **Reactions to Diverse Opinions:** how did you respond to opinions that differed from your own during the activity? Reflect on your initial reactions and how you managed them throughout the discussion.
- **Learning from Others:** discuss what you learned from listening to the perspectives of other group members. How did these insights impact your viewpoint or understanding of the topic?





- **Facilitator's Influence:** from your perspective, in what ways did the facilitator's actions assist or impede the decision-making process? Provide specific examples of helpful or unhelpful actions.
- **Integrating Minority Views:** reflect on the steps you personally took to understand and incorporate minority views into the group's decision. Why do you think these efforts were important?
- **Applying Deep Democracy Principles:** looking ahead, how do you intend to apply the principles of deep democracy in future group situations outside of this educational activity? Consider both personal and professional settings.





IV. Key Advice

For more information, watch this video about groupthink or this video to learn about sabotage behaviour, or consider doing the social ranking exercise created by Jitske Kramer (Kramer, 2014).

Instructions for when two or more ideas receive equal votes or when a unanimous decision emerges (Step 4):

- If two or more ideas receive equal top votes, the facilitator conducts a second, decisive voting round. Here, each member votes for just one of the two leading ideas, ensuring a single winning 'majority vote' idea, and the group can continue with Step 5.
- If a unanimous decision emerges (where one idea receives a vote from all group members), this inclusive decision-making activity ends here. All group members agree and there is no opportunity to practice integrating a minority insight (Step 5). In that case, the facilitator must revisit Step 1 and start a new decision-making activity with one of the other scenarios.





Key Advice

Instructions for the facilitator

As a facilitator, you will guide the other team members in making a collective decision. Your goal is to welcome diverse perspectives, leading your group to a consensus that everyone supports.

Step 1. Assigning Group Facilitators, and explaining the roles and activity | 5 - 10 mins

First, choose one of the following two fictional scenarios:

- **Team-Building Activity:** *“Our team has been allocated a budget of €1,000 to organise a team-building activity. The goal is to enhance collaboration and morale. We need to decide together on a single activity that is engaging, fosters team spirit and fits within the budget. No splitting funds for separate events.”*
- **Community Sustainability Project:** *“We have €1,000 to fund a single sustainability project that will positively impact our local community. The project must be focused on environmental improvement and benefit a specific community. Our task is to collectively select one specific initiative that is practical, impactful and achievable within the allocated budget. No splitting funds for separate projects.”*

Then, read the description of the chosen scenario to the group, and explain that there are two roles in this exercise:

- **Role of Facilitator:** *“I will follow the hand-out, guide the decision-making process and I am tasked with ensuring an open and inclusive environment.”*
- **Role of Decision-Makers:** *“You will actively brainstorm ideas, will be invited to discuss and listen to a diverse range of ideas and ultimately vote for the best idea.”*

Step 2. Collecting all Perspectives

| 15 mins

Encourage all group members to contribute:

- Allow the group one minute of individual idea generation (based on one scenario).
- Lead the discussion, encouraging all members to contribute ideas.
- Ask one of the group members to write down each idea on a flipchart or whiteboard and check if it is written down correctly.
- Aim for the majority of the group members to express an idea.

You can use the following prompts to guide the group discussion:

- *“Who has an idea they want to share with the group?”*
- *“Your idea is intriguing, could you elaborate?”*





- *"To ensure I correctly capture your idea, you're proposing to..."*
- *"Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet."*

Step 3. Actively Searching for Alternatives

| 15 - 20 mins

Encourage all group members to share unconventional and alternative ideas:

- Explain the value of diversity in perspectives.
- Create a non-judgmental environment to welcome unconventional viewpoints.
- Ask the group to think of unconventional and/or alternative ideas that haven't been discussed yet.
- Aim for adding at least 1 or 2 'outside-the-box' ideas. Everything is allowed, as long as it is a single activity and/or project and does not exceed the budget of €1,000.

You can use the following prompts to guide the group discussion:

- *"I'm interested in hearing different viewpoints. Who can think of any alternative ideas?"*
- *"Does anyone have a differing perspective on this matter?"*
- *"Is there anyone who feels we should consider a different approach, something out-of-the-box?"*

Step 4. Consolidating Ideas and Making Decisions

| 20 - 25 mins

Encourage all group members to reflect on all the ideas presented:

- Allow the group one minute of silent reflection, thinking about which ideas they will support.
- Read each idea aloud and invite members to vote (by openly raising their hands).
- Allow them to vote for more than one idea, as long as they (undoubtedly) support the idea.
- Register votes: list the number of votes and names of supporters on a flipchart or whiteboard.

You can use the following prompts to guide the group process:

- *"Please take a minute of silent reflection and think about which ideas you truly support."*
- *"As I read each idea, please raise your hand to vote for the ideas you support."*
- *"Feel free to vote for multiple ideas, but only if you fully support the idea."*

After the vote, you can continue to the next step if you have one winning idea ('the majority vote') and a few people who did not vote for this winning idea ('the no-voters'). However:

- If you reach a tie, conduct a quick second voting round to choose one winning idea. Make sure to write down who did not vote for the winning idea ('the no-voters').
- If you reach a unanimous decision, go back to Step 1 and redo the exercise following the other scenario.





Step 5. Integrating Minority Insights

| 20 - 25 mins

Engage with 'no-voters' to refine the favoured proposal:

- Start a discussion with members who voted 'no' and ask them to explain their perspectives.
- Ask the 'yes-voters' to silently listen to the discussion.
- Ask 'no-voters' how the winning idea can be improved based on their 'minority' insights.
- Present the enhanced idea to the entire group and write the 'refined proposal' on a flipchart or whiteboard.
- Conduct a new voting round only on this new idea, and list the number of votes and names of supporters on a flipchart or whiteboard.

You can use the following prompts to guide the group process:

- *"What would make the leading proposal more agreeable to you?"*
 - *"How would you amend the favoured proposal?"*
 - *"Under what conditions might you support the preferred proposal?"*
 - *"Based on the feedback, we propose to adjust the leading idea by..."*
 - *"Who is in favour of the modified proposal..."*
- Repeat Step 5 if you do not reach a unanimous decision. As long as you have 'no-voters', you can continue to use their insights, refine the proposal and vote again.
 - You can end the activity when all group members vote for the refined idea. You now have a group consensus, based on an idea that incorporates the views of both the majority and minority.





V. References

Human Dimensions (2019, February 12). Groupthink, That's just the way we do it [Video].

YouTube

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