

"The recognition of the equal rights of others to freedom is recognition of the equal rights of all peoples to freedom of expression. This applies equally to situations in which the freedom of others promotes one's own personal freedom, as well as situations which limit one's own personal freedom."

(Uki Maroshek-Klarman)

Learning the Language of Democracy with *Betzavta*

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Contents

I. What is Betzavta?	3
II. Background Information: Israel and the Adam Institute	5
Understanding Israel as a State: The Jewish Unitarian State and Liberal Democracy ...	5
Fields of Conflict in the Interior	6
The Unsolved Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	7
The Israeli Peace Movement	7
III. Understanding Democracy: Learning and Living Democracy with <i>Betzavta</i> ...	8
Attaining Skills in Democracy: knowledge, values, skills.....	10
Democracy Education: its subjects and specialisations.....	12
IV. The Didactics of Betzavta	12
Special Features of Betzavta Didactics.....	13
Method 1: Creating and working through conflicts and dilemma experiences	13
Method 2: Dynamic group processes	15
Method 3: Activating and cooperative learning and teaching methods	16
Overview of methods	17
V. Betzavta in practice: Tips for teaching Betzavta	18
Objectives.....	18
Approaching the methods in the right way	19
Betzavta learning process in three phases	20
Objectives for teachers during the individual process phases	20
Particular demands on teachers during the evaluation phase	21
VI. Structure of the dilemma method.....	22
VII. Betzavta in practice: Seminars and further education offers.....	23
VIII: Betzavta in practice: Betzavta in school:	24
How can Betzavta be Best Integrated into Lessons at School?.....	24
IX. Outlook: Contact with the Adam Institute.....	26
X. Further reading.....	27

I. What is Betzavta?

"Betzavta" (Hebrew "togetherness") was *originally the name of the training manual* used by the "Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace in Memory of Emil Greenzweig" (Jerusalem), founded in 1986, to open its series of programmes on education in democracy and tolerance in 1988.

The Adam Institute was founded against the current background of increasing hostility toward democratic principles and increasing ethnocentrism in Jewish society. The murder of the peace activist, Emil Greenzweig, at a demonstration against the War in the Lebanon (1985) coupled with the alarming results returned from a number of critical school reports, which highlighted serious failures in the institutionalized teaching of political education, particularly with regard to peace and democracy, were the real triggers for the foundation of the Adam Institute. A group of committed teachers took the decision to set up an independent non-governmental peace institute. This was done in order to play an active part in reforming the current state of political and social education taught in schools, which was being demanded by critics of the present system. Uki Maroshek-Klarman, the Director of the Adam Institute, formulated the aims of the Institute and the future goals of its work in the field of education. Indeed, her vision that political education should involve actively addressing the values and conflicts within a democracy formed the basis for all of the Institute's programs. Indeed, she and the Adam Institute have been honoured with a large number of awards (New Israel Prize 1990; Jerusalem Foundation Prize 1997; Speaker of the Israeli Parliament Prize 1998; Bertelsmann Stiftung Award 2001) for their innovative contribution to political education.

At the time of its release, the *Betzavta* training program represented a completely new concept for the Israeli political education system. This was because of the subjects on which it placed emphasis and because of its experience-orientated learning methods.

The implementation of the original version of *Betzavta* initially took place in the Jewish section of the Israeli educational system, both for students and in the area of advanced teacher training. The programme was also rapidly integrated into political educational work outside the school system. Training units from *Betzavta* formed the basis for courses with newly arrived immigrants, social workers, police officers and multipliers from various educational institutions and

peace organisations. The programme was also adapted for the Arabic school sector in Israel as early as in 1988.

International adaptation of the programme began in 1996, initially in German at the "Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung" (Centre for Applied Political Research) at the University of Munich, then subsequently through the Adam Institute cooperating with international partners in Northern Ireland, Switzerland and South-East Europe. Today *Betzavta* is an internationally renowned democracy education programme used in school and non-school educational institutions.

The ***present version of Betzavta***, developed on the basis of the original programme, represents an enhancement of the original. Besides the original modules, it contains a set of activities and training elements for practising methods of regulating conflicts democratically. These originate from programmes created to support the Middle East peace process ("Peace among Equals", 1996; "Building Blocks of Democracy", 1998). In addition the manual offers other preliminary exercises and complementary suggestions for designing teaching units and courses.

As far as international political education is concerned, **Betzavta** has become a **synonym for an innovative conflict-based educational concept from Israel, whose learning process concentrates on creating conflicts and dilemmas and working through them with the aim of achieving hostility-free democratic communication between citizens sharing a joint system of values.**

From the evaluations that are now available, it is clear that the educational work carried out using the *Betzavta* program on which this concept is based has had a positive effect on the attitude and cognitive social abilities of those taking part. The program successfully promotes the ability to understand the different and conflicting interests and to differentiate and coordinate different perspectives. It also contributes towards the ability to understand complicated situations and teaches people to see situations of conflict through "democratic spectacles" (Bommes, Guter, Wolff-Jontofsohn 2002).

Betzavta: Educational Programme in Democracy Divided up into 10 Topical Areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is Democracy?• Fundamental Principles of Democracy• The Relationship of the Majority and Minority in a Democratic State

- Basic and Civil Rights
- Freedom of Speech and Information
- The Monopoly Power of the State
- Democracy – Security – Power
- Nationalism
- What it Means to be a Good Democrat
- Democratic Non-Violent Solutions to Conflicts

The individual activities in the core topic can, depending on previous knowledge and the requirements of the participants, be combined *variably* into a basic or intermediate course.

II. Background Information: Israel and the Adam Institute

Betzavta is a teaching program for democracy education in a specific environment of social and political conflict. In the Israeli conflict environment the conflict between nationalistic and democratic values are tackled vehemently. As far as this conflict situation is concerned, the Adam Institute has adopted a clear position: the aim of its educational work is to make a contribution towards building democratic skills ("virtues") and securing peace. The objectives and the subjects upon which the emphasis of the Israeli Betzavta Program is placed are based on the work undertaken by the Adam Institute for a democratic Israel and the defence of democracy against nationalistic group interests.

The specific value-perspective of the Israeli programme and its significance for educational work in countries where heavy conflict take place in political and social change (transformation processes) can be clarified by taking a look at the context in which this takes place.

Understanding Israel as a State: The Jewish Unitarian State and Liberal Democracy

As the state of Israel was founded in 1948, it defined itself in its declaration of independency as "a Jewish and democratic state". The founding fathers of this new state proclaimed the birth of a state designed to finally provide the Jewish people with a "Jewish homeland" following the Holocaust in a democratically

constituted unitarian state. Following the catastrophe of the Holocaust, the newly-founded state wanted to guarantee all Jewish people the diaspora of an unlimited right of return to Israel, which still applies today. Simultaneously it relocated its public and religious identity, and with it all its symbols (flag, national anthem, public holidays, food laws), into the Jewish culture and tradition.

According to the maxims formulated in its declaration of independence, all people living in the state's territories should possess the same basic rights irrespective of race, origin, religion or gender, and be able to live as free citizens in a liberal democracy without discrimination and deprivation. This basic declaration also included the large Arab minority living on Israeli territory. Their language was officially declared second official language.

Due to the large influx of Jewish immigrants emigrating from Arabic countries and Eastern Europe, the size of the Jewish population has continually increased over the last decades, and established itself as the majority in terms of numbers (4.5 million). At the same time the Arabic population today represents a minority of nearly 1.5 million Arabic-Israeli citizens. These mainly live separate to the Jewish population in specific regions and cities.

Fields of Conflict in the Interior

Israel comprises an "ethnic democracy" (Smoocha) with a Jewish majority originating from some 80 countries, and a large Arabic-Palestinian minority. It is in fact a multi-ethnic state with sharply defined limits between the Jewish collective and the Arabic minority living within the state's borders. Apparent cleavages also exist within the Jewish population, which are marked by their origins from European or Arabic countries, by political contrasts, by the degree of religiousness, and their belonging to a class or having a status. An explosive field of conflict has developed over the last 50 years out of this internal potential for conflict.

The Arabic minority's position in the Jewish national state to-date is that of a minority in the manner that the Israeli sociologist S. Smoocha formulated: "(one where) all civil rights are officially recognised, but, in reality, only granted grudgingly" (Smoocha 1998). Israeli authors like David Grossmann speak of present-absentees, i.e. a minority widely negated by the Jewish collective. In the distribution of material resources considerable inequality in treatment and prejudice exists, which effects the equipment of Arabic schools and the supply of Arabic communities in particular.

Virulent inner-political and social conflicts within the heterogeneous Jewish population escalate in particular because of the large ideological differences, which latch onto the attitude to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the question of the future transfer of regions or the two-state solution. The missing division of state and religion is vehemently fought against as a religious force by secularised Israelis. But also the privileges for the ultra-orthodox population resulting from factors relating to the foundation of the state are fuel for inner-political controversy. Over the last few decades new gaps in the national consensus have resulted, since what are referred to as "Oriental Jews", who have emigrated from Arabic countries, have begun to question the dominance of the Jews in Israel, who originally came from Europe, over the "second class" Oriental Jews.

The Unsolved Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Since its foundation Israel has defended its existence in the Near East against its Arabic neighbours in numerous wars. The war in 1967 has in the meantime led to 30 years of military hegemony over the region in West Jordan Land. Following the failure of the Oslo Process there is still no permanent and representative two-state solution to be seen in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Due to the complicated, emotional and power-political mix of situations, Israeli politics has refused until today "recognition of the equal right of the Palestinian people to its own state" (Uki Maroshek-Klarman, in: *Peace among Equals*, 1996, p. 95). However the Palestinian opposition also shows no leaning towards solving the historical conflict in the present day by recognising the Israel's equal right to existence.

The Israeli Peace Movement

Compared to other international peace movements, the Israeli peace movement demonstrates several characteristics which can be explained due to the permanent situation of threat in the country. It neither concerns itself with anti-military actions, nor atomic disarmament, nor ecological or global problems. Its topics concern peace with Arabic neighbours and the democratisation of its own society. In their commitment to peace in their own society, Israeli peace organisations involve themselves in: (1) supporting the foreign-political peace process through political and social actions and (2) educational work in the area of conflict-group education, teaching democracy and tolerance in schools, and (3) in regional and local initiatives for promoting a democratic and tolerant Israeli society.

The Adam Institute in Jerusalem, founded by a group of committed educators (1986), belongs, within the large spectrum of peace organisations, to the non-state organisations committed to *working for education in democracy and tolerance* in the school and non-school educational sector. Its team of staff reflects the diversity of Israeli society. Arab and Jewish Israelis, secularised and religious Jews and long-established, but also new Russian immigrants count amongst them. Its programme relates exclusively to the political and social problems already sketched out above. They are to be understood as democratic answers to the conflicts in Jewish society.

The Political-Educational Programme at the Adam Institute in Jerusalem

- Sensitisation to the needs and rights of "others"
- Recognition of the same rights for all to the largest degree of freedom and the achievement of aims in life.
- Separation of civil citizenship and nationality
- Emphasis of the identity of civil citizenship in contrast to belonging to an ethnic/national collective
- Recognition of the rights of minorities
- Securing peace via the democratic and non-violent regulation of conflicts between individuals, groups and national collectives

III. Understanding Democracy: Learning and Living Democracy with *Betzavta*

The democracy and tolerance education programme at the Adam Institute is based principally on an understanding of democracy as a form of life *and social idea and therefore as a political and educational task*. In its understanding of democracy, it relates to the democracy-educational approach of the American philosopher John Dewey (Dewey, *Democracy and Education* 2000/1916). According to Dewey's definition, a democratic society is a society of those who communicate with one another and planning, communicate concerning the living world they jointly share. Not the divided ethnic or cultural membership, nor the common history nor language create a community in his opinion, but a "creative democracy" is first created when citizens in a free state regulate and form their common living space through the medium of language. This does not just

characterise democracy as a form of government or society, but characterises it mainly as a specific form of living together. The quality of a democracy is directly linked as a result to the quality of social relations in it together. As a life form it lives from communication in close social proximity, "in the daily world" as Dewey formulated it.

The conditions for participating in this way are democratic competences. Jointly learning the language of democracy is a basic requirement of this, in order to be able to consider social problems and conflicts through "democratic eyes" (Uki Maroshek-Klarman).

Following on from Dewey, democratic education has the following tasks:

- (1) *The understanding of democracy as a political and social concept must be taught and learnt.* Democracy characterises an historic achievement, the stability and development of which - as a form of life, society and government - does not result automatically, but is dependent on competences towards democratic action and "living" in a democracy. Leading a democratic life requires knowledge, convictions, the exercise of democratic communication forms and the experience of participation, belonging and responsibility.

Democracy must be able to be experienced as a quality of living together.

- (2) *The interpretation of democracy as a life form goes deeper than the approach that democracy is a form of authority and form of society.* Political education in the sense of educating democracy is not identical with commonly teaching politics in the sense of institutional studies. It is communicated via social experience in close social proximity and via a specific moral "everyday" climate. To make this experience possible, educational institutions should implement life in a democracy as an everyday experience from nursery age onwards.

Learning about democracy has to be set against a situation in which democracy is experienced.

- (3) Learning democracy in an authoritarian and repressive climate in which children and adults are exposed to the contradiction between theory and undemocratic practice can hardly progress successfully. Because of this it is significant to understand education in democracy as a normative, social and communicative, fundamental principle of educational processes, and in particular of school development and culture.
- (4) *Democracy promotes and makes the conquest of violence possible.* The perspective from which Betzavta has been developed includes the

conviction that an immediate correlation between learning democracy and abstaining from violence exists. Education in democracy should therefore include procedures for the democratic, non-violent regulation of conflicts (mediation).

Dewey: Trichotomy of the Term Democracy	
Form of Authority Basic Rights and Civil Rights Rule of Law	Form of Society Pluralism Heterogeneity
Elections/Sovereignty of the People	Social Differentiation
Parliamentarism/Party Competition Division of Power Social Security	Peaceful Solutions to Conflicts Competition/Market Economy Openness/General Public Civil Society
Life Form Fairness Tolerance Democratic Competences Diversity of Lifestyles ("pursuit of happiness") Diversity of Potential Solidarity Self-Organisation	
Participation	

Attaining Skills in Democracy: knowledge, values, skills

Room for manoeuvre for setting the core emphasis in political education results from Dewey's differentiation of the various dimensions of learning democracy. These variants range from the communication of knowledge on the organisational requirements of politics (assignment of power, building a state, active and passive voting rights, parliament etc.) and concepts that lean more

strongly towards relationships between living worlds and the attainment of patterns in attitude and behaviour for fulfilling the democratic role of the citizen, to pre-political concepts that attempt to promote general social skills via social learning.

According to the philosophy of the Adam Institute, political education should neglect none of the three dimensions characterised by Dewey. Uki Maroshek-Klarman formulated this very precisely in her book "Education for Democracy": "Teaching democracy should be as closely linked to current political events as possible, and offer instruments for dealing with this, otherwise teaching democracy loses its meaning" (1996).

The objective of democratic education should be to enable children, young adults and adults to understand the democratic structures and processes within political structures and within their own lives and to act responsibly in accordance with them.

And it is set against this background that it is so important that people have the necessary personal and social skills for living in a democracy. These prerequisites, which include moral awareness, developing a sense of judgement and forming an opinion, can be developed when young adults and adults are allowed to address fundamental democratic values in an intensive way and are shown how to resolve conflicts democratically and non-violently. (Maroshek-Klarman 1993).

According to the philosophy of the Adam Institute, then, democracy education should be more than just teaching political knowledge.

The fundamental educational concept underlying the *Betzavta* program:

- Teaching a "qualitative understanding of democracy" (Uki Maroshek-Klarman 1993) and
- helping people to acquire the personal and social skills necessary for living in a democracy and
- promoting democratic communication and cooperation between different ethnic, cultural, social and religious groups.

To this end, then, *Betzavta* can be understood as a political education program that attempts to influence the attitude, behavioural tendencies and social relationships of people within a society from a particular normative perspective (that is, based on a democratic system of values). The emphasis of this educational process is on confronting the normative concept of *the same right for*

all people to as much freedom as possible in the way in which they lead their own lives (Maroshek-Klarman 1993: 1).

The most important task of the learning process which is initiated with the help of activities and exercises taken from *Betzavta* is to highlight the kind of conflicts that limit or prohibit these fundamental rights (described as "rights of equality " in the language of *Betzavta*).

Democracy Education: its subjects and specialisations

Specific areas of issue and core specialisations can be allocated to the three main democracy education areas that have already been touched upon. The overview below attempts to separate the subjects and specialisations allocated to the three main areas. According to the Adam Institute's understanding, however, in practice it will be impossible to limit teaching to just one of the three main areas.

	Democracy as a Life Form	Democracy as a Form of Society	Democracy as a Form of Authority
Aspects/Topics	Personal, social, moral requirements for actively participating in and forming society	Pluralism, heterogeneity, conflict, competitive, public conduct; civil society	Political institutions, power, control, human rights, sovereignty of the people, rights, decision procedures
Aims	Personal skills, development of moral guides	Learning social norms, social competence	Learning politics, political competence

IV. The Didactics of Betzavta

How can democratic skills be promoted? In numerous countries the traditional form of political education is characterised by a mainly cognitive orientation. Teaching politics aims, on the one hand, to disseminate information on political institutions and processes, and, on the other, to reflexively address political and social problems. Correspondingly conventional political didactics mainly source learning strategies that serve the cognitive dissemination and expropriation of

knowledge and the personal development of opinions. Lectures, reading texts, seminars and pro-contra discussions, political simulations, debates and deliberation forums are the main methods used when teaching this kind of disseminating and information processing type of political education.

The aim of the *Adam Institute's educational process* is different. This is because rather than just wanting to teach knowledge and findings, it sets out to influence change and development in people's attitude (Maroshek-Klarman; 1993).

Special Features of Betzavta Didactics

The core objective of the educational process based on the Adam Institute's method is to develop and promote a democratic personality, which identifies with fundamental democratic principles and is therefore in a position to communicate non-violently in a democratic way.

In order to initiate a process of development that is based on social and moral values, Betzavta sets out to combine different educational approaches and methods.

The combinations of methods that are characteristic of Betzavta education consist of
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Methods for creating and working through conflicting values and dilemmas● Methods involving group dynamics● Triggering and cooperative learning and teaching methods

These methods are combined in the modules with the aim of triggering intensive emotional and cognitive learning processes. In practice, the Betzavta method creates fierce dynamic group processes and conflict. Anyone that has ever taken part in a Betzavta training program knows how intense the interaction and clarification processes can be. In an ideal situation, the group will slowly start to focus on a democratic form of communication and principles that are generally binding (norms).

In order to make the Betzavta educational method transparent, especially for facilitators, it is important to explain the three methods individually.

Method 1: Creating and working through conflicts and dilemma experiences

This conflict-reducing method forms the methodical core of the Betzavta teaching approach. It serves in creating, experiencing and working through conflicting

values and dilemma situations. This core methodical and teaching-based strategy for creating conflict follows on in the tradition of the moral-education-through-dilemma-experiences concept developed by the American social psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg's educational concept is based on the step-by-step model for moral development, which he himself developed, and on his experiments for stimulating moral thinking through discussion and moral dilemmas.

Some helpful background information:

According to Kohlberg, moral development follows a set pattern from a pre-conventional step (meaning not yet orientated towards binding rules and agreements) to a conventional step (meaning orientated in line with agreements and social norms) and, when the development conditions are right, goes on to reach a post-conventional step (orientated towards universal norms), which means that the individual's orientation is no longer on group interests but on universally valid norms.

According to Kohlberg learning processes can influence moral development.

Kohlberg also explains that it is possible to stimulate the ability to judge morally by giving people the opportunity to address and come to terms with the moral principles on the next level of development with regards to the steps detailed above. Kohlberg and his research team experimented with so-called hypothetical dilemmas (decisions about life-preserving measures such as organ donation). These dilemma situations were presented to the test subjects. Using a clever questioning technique it was possible to prompt the test subjects to formulate exactly their current moral position and recognize any contradictions in their value judgements. These experiments using dilemma situations demonstrated that it is possible to set a reflexive process in motion during the course of dilemma discussions. This involves those taking part addressing and tackling the advantages and disadvantages of a moral principle. In an ideal situation, a higher level of moral awareness will be reached when the process of addressing the advantages and disadvantages of a moral principle at a higher level leads to its recognition as a sensible norm.

The dilemma situations found in the *Betzavta process* are not related to contrived conflict situations, that is, situations that have been imported into the group process. The conflict situations which form part of the *Betzavta* activities are created (a) directly from the group process and interactions taking place within the learning group and (b) from actual political and social problem areas. At the end of the day, the conflict and moral dilemma situations addressed always involve confronting rights of equality ("the equal rights of everyone to

freedom") and their universal recognition. One of the dilemmas, for example, that often arises in Betzavta seminars is when those participating are vehemently in favour of equality between men and women, but are against recognizing the rights of minorities.

Another example for establishing conflict-education access is the so-called "*dream house activity*": This exercise usually triggers fierce conflict about the distribution of material resources when those taking part are asked during the second and third stages of the group process to accommodate their individual imaginary designs together on a rather small plot of land.. The evaluation round demonstrates how differently individuals deal with conflict situations. The process of reflecting on the "conflict solutions" that have materialized is concentrated on the issue of finding a democratic means of solving conflict and the advantages and disadvantages of different methods and results. To this end, the evaluation of the dynamic group processes focuses on questions of equality and justice. Finally, while implementing that learned, it is possible to discuss clear parallels to real socio-political conflicts and the advantages and disadvantages of different solution options (such as the partitioning of a country, cession of territory or occupation).

Method 2: Dynamic group processes

In *Betzavta* the interactions, behaviours and conflict situations that are important for the education process are created through dynamic group processes. These grow out of the Betzavta activities. Social behaviour patterns are deliberately targeted, mobilized and activated during the initial phase. While these events might seem aimless, they are actually very productive for the process of recognition that takes place in the group as soon as the evaluation and digestion phase of that which has been learned begins.

Here, too, some background information. The technique of using dynamic group processes for educational or therapeutic development processes can be traced back to the German-American social psychologist Kurt Lewin.

The group-dynamic concepts are based on the recognition that group behaviour itself can be made the starting point for social learning. A group theory and pedagogic-therapeutic approach to education resulted from his research work with lab groups. He ascertained that dynamic processes effective in groups cannot just be observed, but also used to influence social relations. According to Lewin bias and stereotypes are not just dismantled via the dissemination of the correct information. In his opinion patterns of perception and bias can only be corrected via targeted, consciously initiated experiences. In group-dynamic

training groups a social sphere favourable to the atmosphere can be created in which the individual forgets his old patterns of thought and behaviour.

As a consequence the group is turned into a source of influence for its members. The efforts towards changes in attitude or behaviour can either be supported or blocked by the group. The group itself can become a medium and objective for change.

This learning process, made possible in and through groups, normally takes place in three phases. He understands the first phase as being one of unfreezing, in which the members, with the aid of specific techniques, become acquainted with the attitudes and evaluation benchmarks that have dominated until now and place these in question. The potential for "moving" first takes place after this phase of self-perception. In the second phase the group members can become open for new information and perceptions. Old attitudes can then be placed in question and modified from the alternative culture of values developing within the group. The third phase serves finally to stabilise the new perspectives and norms ("refreezing").

Lewin's basic concept of mobilising and analysing dynamic forces in groups, and using them to change attitudes, forms the basis for a series of group-dynamic processes. His concept was implemented very early on in Israeli encounter projects between Jews and Arabs, and can look back on a long tradition in conflict-group education.

Here is an example of how dynamic group processes can be implemented in *Betzavta* to initiate interaction and promote the process of realization:

In the so-called "slip game", those taking part react very differently when asked to achieve a majority by securing a majority of the voting slips within a set period of time. Individual behaviour can vary considerably from passiveness to negotiation to the use of violence. These different patterns of behaviour provide the material for a fundamental evaluation of individual motives, interests and attitudes during the evaluation phase.

Method 3: Activating and cooperative learning and teaching methods

Teaching and learning methods based on interaction and cooperation are regarded as fundamental for progressive teaching. The field of democratic education values these methods highly because they enable lessons to move away from a teacher or lecturer-centred teaching style and to place the emphasis of the teaching process onto the ability of those taking part to take responsibility for their own plans and actions.

One of the main uses of interactive and cooperation-based forms of learning in *Betzavta* is for practicing democratic communication, that is, they facilitate the exchange of opinion and the ability to appreciate different points of view and can make negotiation processes possible. Depending on the subject chosen, such as the "the right to vote and the right to be elected" activity for example, interactive and cooperation-based forms of learning also serve the development of controversial points of view and therefore the creation and processing of conflict situations.

Such activities are structured in the following way:

- Individual work - participants start by reflecting upon a particular issue
- each individual explains and formulates his/her own personal standpoint.
- Small groups – opinions are first exchanged in small groups. This enables each participant to perceive, compare and examine their own opinions alongside the opinions of others.
- Plenum – In the concluding plenum phase the entire spectrum of opinion is presented and discussed.

Here is an example from the German version of *Betzavta*: In the "a good democrat" activity those taking part are asked to think about their own ideas about what a good democrat would be and to express their opinions. Then, in small groups, they compare their different ideas and agree on the fundamental characteristics that make up a "good democrat". The third phase involves setting up a kind of "democratic marketplace" in which very different supplementary ideas are presented. The process of comparing the answers and seeing where others have placed the emphasis makes it possible for individual participants to appreciate other points of view. The result is a wide range of detail and emphasis that didn't exist previously with this degree of clarity.

Overview of methods

Method 1:

Creating and working through conflicts and dilemma experiences

Objective: Transforming external conflicts into internal dilemmas and the development of morals

Objective: Orientation towards democratic norms and values

Method 2: Dynamic group processes

Perceiving the attitudes and behaviour patterns of oneself and others in an intensive way

Objective: Interaction experiences and expanding one's own point of view

Method 3: Activating and cooperative learning and teaching methods

Forming of an opinion, discussions and negotiations

Objective: Democratic communication; finding a consensus

V. Betzavta in practice: Tips for teaching Betzavta

The following points have been added to make it easier to work with *Betzavta*. They address the lesson aims, how to approach the methods and how to organize the Betzavta learning processes.

Objectives

- The educational process focuses on the development and promotion of democratic attitudes. All of the activities encourage the participants to address and confront the fundamental issues associated with living together as a society.
- Participants should (1) learn about democratic principles, (2) weigh up their advantages and disadvantages and (3) gradually learn to identify themselves with democratic values.
- To this end, then, the most important teaching aims are (1) sensitizing participants to conflicts and the causes of conflict, (2) practicing democratic communication and (3) looking for democratic ways of resolving conflict.
- Dilemma experiences should play a major part in achieving these aims. This means: At its core Betzavta is a method for creating and working

through conflict with the ultimate objective of creating a situation in which those participating appreciate fundamental democratic rights.

Approaching the methods in the right way

- The Betzavta method has three main characteristics:
 1. The material for discussions is delivered by the group itself during the group process.
 2. The discussions process serves in clarifying behavioural patterns and positions.
 3. The aim of the evaluation phase is to create awareness about discrepancies with regards to attitudes and actual behavioural patterns. The evaluation process is organized in line with particular key words such as "equality", "rights"; "dilemmas", "needs"; "freedom".
- It is important that this structure is retained. It is also important to see the *dynamic group, discussion and evaluation phases* as a part of an overall process.
- The following applies: Teachers should allow all those involved enough time for self-reflection, for individual opinion forming and for exchanging ideas with others. Some of the exercises can trigger fierce conflicts between those taking part.
- Many of the participants will find it difficult to differentiate between acting character and role behaviour and difficult to wait to see which changes and attitudes might transpire during the course of the evaluation phase. There is a danger, however, that conflicts might only seem to have been resolved on the surface but continue to have a negative effect on the overall atmosphere. For this reason it is important to work through conflicts that have been created thoroughly.
- Some of the exercises require those taking part to speak openly about their own personal experiences. Not all participants will want to speak openly in this way. It is absolutely essential to respect the right of people to hold such a position. Everyone taking part must be given the right to share their experiences as he or she is willing to do of their own accord.

- Within the framework of a democracy and tolerance education program, it is important that teachers are aware that they are not detached from the learning process as people. The only way in which their educational work can have the quality of an open and democratic learning process is when the teachers themselves reflect upon their educational goals and their own attitudes.
- Teachers should start by considering their own standpoints with regard to the fundamental democratic issues and conflict situations addressed in Betzavta.
- If, for instance, a person with no experience of group dynamics would like to work in a teaching role in the future, it is best to begin with the more simple exercises such as the String Activity, the Dough Activity, the Blind Artist Activity and the "Barometer exercise",.

Betzavta learning process in three phases

To achieve a clearly structured teaching environment, the division of Betzavta activities into different process phases should be observed.

In each of the individual activities, the learning process is split up into **three** process phases, each of which are connected and build on each other:

- Phase 1. starting group dynamics / or individual reflection
- Phase 2. discussions / in small group in the plenum
- Phase 3: evaluation phase **/in the plenum**

Objectives for teachers during the individual process phases

It is important for teachers to follow the following structure:

During phase 1: to allow the dynamic group process that is developing time to take its course so that it becomes possible to identify a wide spectrum of behaviours, interactions and/or opinions.

During phase 2: to label the experiences, problems and interactions precisely during the discussions phase and to work through the different positions that exist in the group.

During phase 3: to make the conflicts and dilemmas transparent during the evaluation and joint reflection phase and to establish a relationship between

these and democratic values and patterns of behaviour. Teachers should be looking to focus in more closely and bring to a head the conflicts and dilemmas developing during this phase until the participants start to become aware of their own moral positions and contradictory tendencies.

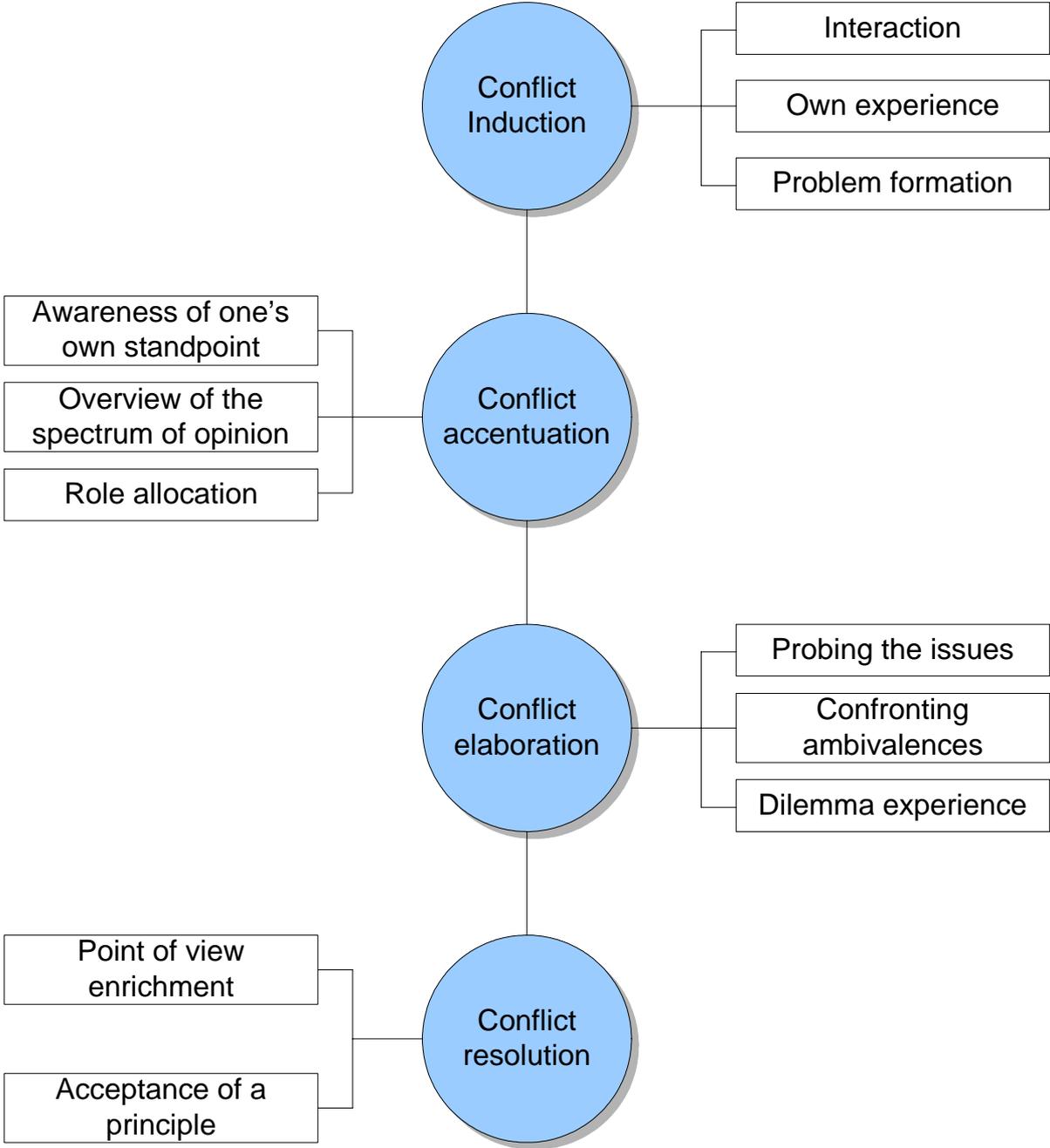
Particular demands on teachers during the evaluation phase

The job of teachers here is to steer the process in such a way that the inconsistencies from the group process are highlighted and made transparent, while also making sure that the conflict situations that have been triggered are not allowed to escalate further. Given that some of the exercises can lead to fierce conflict, having a certain amount of experience of dynamic group processes and/or of the program will be advantageous.

During this phase teachers should be making sure that discussions do not go "too far" and organizing proceedings along Betzavta's "key democratic terms" such as equality, rights, freedom and needs.

The evaluation phase can and, indeed, must be shortened or modified rigorously in line with the participants' level of development (such as for children and adolescents). Even when going into the ins and outs and analysing all the different positions in detail is not possible, it's important to be satisfied with progress, however small. Indeed, a great deal has already been achieved when it has been possible to get the participating group to listen actively and to recognize their own standpoints and the standpoints of others. It is often a good idea to offer alternative evaluation suggestions when the discussions among participants begin to tire. Such suggestions might include visualizations (drawings, posters, wall newspaper etc.) and/or suggestions as to alternative types of presentation (role play, songs, texts, theatre etc.), all of which are aimed at stimulating the creativity of those taking part.

VI. Structure of the dilemma method



VII. Betzavta in practice: Seminars and further education offers

As far as international adult education and non-formal education for young adults is concerned, *Betzavta* further education courses are organized for a large number of career groups.

Betzavta seminars, for example, are available with specialized content for career groups including social education workers, social workers, member of public administration offices, police officers and people whose work includes inter-cultural relationships.

These seminars are usually structured as follows:

- Time frame: 2-4 days
- Program: Selection is carried out according to the target group
- Modularly organized: Basic course, integration course, intensive course.

These courses have been designed primarily for furthering the education of individuals and developing one's own values and attitudes. Participants are often able to integrate elements from the seminars into their own working environment. We have conducted a number of interviews with individuals as part of the evaluation process. From these we know that individuals gain a great deal of personal wealth from these and have emphasised that the experience has made it possible for them to change the way in which they deal with conflict situations.

Betzavta has been able to establish a renowned position for itself in the world of international further education. Within the framework of these further education courses, teachers at all levels of schooling are (1) introduced to the program and its methods with the aim of awakening a recognition for the necessity of democratic education, (2) shown the opportunities available for transferring elements of the program and altering lessons and (3) how to highlight the fundamental questions with regard to making teaching and school more democratic.

TIP: Suggestions for seminar concepts and programs can be found on the website belonging to the University of Munich (www.uni-muenchen.de/CAP) and the Dadalos website (www.dadalos.org).

And at the English-language website for the "Demokratie lernen und leben" (Learning and living Democracy) at www.blk-demokratie.de

VIII: Betzavta in practice: Betzavta in school:

The following suggestions have been derived from international experience of different school systems and are not tied to a particular education or school system:

- (1) Betzavta is in no way a programme limited to politics, community and social studies lessons. Exercises from Betzavta can complement political, historical, philosophical and cultural lesson topics via political and moral perspectives. Reference to actual situations can be drawn from this, correlations between personal experiences and factual topics demonstrated, and students aided in seeing situations of conflict and the regulation of conflicts through "democratic eyes".
- (2) **In concrete terms:** if we accept democracy education as a multidisciplinary educational principle, many ways exist to enrich teaching at school with offers from Betzavta.
- (3) **In specific subjects:** history, community studies, ethics, religion as main subjects, and courses in psychology and philosophy are obvious choices. Numerous possibilities are also available for linking political learning and lessons in language and literature within the bounds of problem-oriented lessons in literature.
- (4) **In interdisciplinary teaching and during project days:** the chance exists here to mould the framework topic in a more lively and experience-oriented manner by taking a thematically suitable area of work. Consequentially topics like "human rights", "the persecution of minorities", "racism" or "Europe" can be linked very well with activities from Betzavta.

How can Betzavta be Best Integrated into Lessons at School?

There are basically **two strategies** for working with Betzavta: The selection of topically suitable **individual exercises** according to the module principle, or the integration of complete **exercise blocks** into the corresponding lesson topic. Individual teaching modules or whole topical units can be integrated into lessons in the main subjects.

Variant 1:

Unfortunately the possibility of offering a complete Betzavta topic block as a teaching unit in school is limited due to the amount of material in the lesson timetable and the reduced number of hours available. The most effective opportunities can be found in history, politics and community studies and in 'A'-Level courses, in particular ethics, religion, psychology and philosophy. Situations less dominated by the curriculum such as project days, multidisciplinary lessons over several days, seminars and work groups provide further opportunities.

Variant 2:

As a rule it is much easier to combine topics in the subjects mentioned above with topically-related individual exercises from Betzavta. Exercises from Betzavta can be used as preliminary exercises, for advanced studies and for course-end activities, so that new questions concerning problems, updates or transfer possibilities are created depending on the interrelation. A history lesson on the topic of the "social contract" can be opened with an exercise on "the importance of a contract". Lessons in literature can start with an exercise on "minorities-majorities" in order to give students access to the topic.

Learning democracy can be seen as a task that stretches across subjects for all school types. It takes place at a number of levels in the school environment

- In politics and social study lessons as knowledge
- In all other subjects as an expansion of the way in which things are viewed
- In all school situations as social learning
- As a component part of a democratic school culture

IX. Outlook: Contact with the Adam Institute

The work of the Adam Institute takes place under the heading of: "There is no Thing as some Democracy".

As well as representing a special training program, *Betzavta* also represents a peace institute and its educational commitment in the teaching of democracy and tolerance.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the work of the Adam Institute, its educational and political activities, the further development of its programs and current projects, should visit the Adam Institute's website:

www.adam-institute.net.il

X. Further reading

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