

Shakin' the classroom

Spreading alternative knowledge sharing methods

Please briefly explain the knowledge sharing method/approach/tool

What are the main processes? What are the expected outcomes? In what ways does that method bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

Take a side as a method focuses on particular concept, problem or issue, that needs deliberations and exploration, and engages participants to construct knowledge around the issue, and finally to stage a court case for the issue, acting as defendants or prosecutors in front of audience. We have developed it to fit the timespan of 8 days of the summer school through which we have been exploring citizen participation in museums and heritage.

This is how 8 days program has worked:

Day 1 – Getting to know each other; Lectures about theories, key concepts, and dilemmas related to issue in question, with continuous discussion with participants.

Day 2 – debating skills and forms of presenting/argumenting the cases; forming two groups.

Day 3 and Day 4 – exploring and researching the issue/concept in groups.

Day 5 – developing draft concept for or against the issues; mentoring work with groups.

Day 6 and Day 7 – workshop on presentation skills and working on group presentations; mentoring work with groups.

Day 8 – rehearsal; public event with audience simulating court case for or against the issue with follow up discussion; the audience votes for or against before the case starts, and then vote again after the court case is presented, as a way to see changes in the attitudes; evaluation.

In which way is this method alternative?

How does it try to bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

The method engages participants in exploring and researching the topic/problem/issue, building their arguments and storyline for or against a specific position, and constructing knowledge through that process. It gives inputs as well as a lot of freedom to participants in building knowledge on the topic, finding sources and debating, and develops research, argumentation, and dialoguing skills.

What are your experiences with the method? (up to 200 words)

In case you have created, tested or experienced the method, what are your experiences? How have you applied the method? Would you change anything or suggest further development?

Together with two other colleagues I have used and adapted the method in few situations. The longer version of it was a project Zauzmi stranu (Take a side) which we run in Museum of Yugoslavia in 2016 for museum professionals and students from the Balkan region on the issue of citizen participation in heritage and museums. This is the longer 8 days outline that I have explained above.

In Heritage Management Course I teach, I use the method in a shorter manner for exploring issues of colonial looting and repatriation of cultural heritage with students. The students are given assignment to read Universal Museum Declaration as well as other writings on the topic, and take side on whether they are for or against the concept of Universal Museum, constructing their point of view and argument particular position, while providing examples. I usually do it over two classes and homework, but the longer the time dedicated to it, the more participants can dive into the issue and form informed arguments.

Therefore, the method can be adapted for different topics and purposes, as long as there is an issue around which dialogue and opposing arguments should be constructed and debated.

In your opinion, for what kind of pedagogical contexts, settings, participants and/or objectives is this method best suited for? (up to 200 words)

E.g. age, educational level, cultural and professional background, etc. Did it prove useful or successful in particular contexts and for particular objectives?

The method is excellent for dealing with issues and topics that are divisive and contested in a society or a particular professional field, as well as with trends in a professional field that are pushed with no space to be critically examined and thought through (such as audience development and citizen participation in culture). It is suited for different cultural backgrounds and age, but it requires reading skills and time to explore the topic.

What are the requirements for applying this method? (up to 300 words)

Are there any requirements or limits in terms of location, number or profile of participants, tools and devices, time constraints and other? Are there certain skills, sensitivities or relations that need to be developed or assumed for the method to be successfully applied? What are the crucial points to pay attention to when implementing the method in different contexts? Are there any contexts for which this method is not best suited?

The method is not suited for short time slots and quick educational processes, as it requires at least 2 hours for a basic simulation to take place. It is best suited for a weeklong or longer educational processes, with actual argumentation and "court case arguments" happening as an outcome of the overall exploration and educational process, followed by a debate and reflection.

If possible, please briefly explain the context in which the method/tool/approach has been developed. (up to 200 words)

Who were the main actors? What were the main reasons/motivations/inspirations behind the creation? Which previous developments have influenced it? If relevant, in what ways did the method/tool develop or change over time or in different locations/context?

Two colleagues and myself have developed the specific approach for the project Zauzmi stranu (Take a side) which we run in Museum of Yugoslavia in 2016 for museum professionals from the Balkan region on the issue of citizen participation in heritage and museums. However, a part of the inspiration came from the exercises and competitions of law students in which they take up a case and play defendants or prosecutors, exercising how to apply legal instruments and measures on real life cases, as well as to defend or tackle positions that are not necessarily their own personal preferences. The form we came up with is not bound by specific laws and legal texts, but allows for the freer exploration of different ideas and texts, coming up with unique arguments and defending them.

Could you provide any relevant testimonies?

If possible, please provide testimonies, reflections, evaluations and statements about the method, by yourself or method's author(s) or other users.

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Additional references and links

If possible, please provide additional links, literature, instructions and/or other relevant content. These can be links, texts and similar. In case you want to share pictures, videos, reports or other materials, please send them to s.nikitin@univ-lyon2.fr.

<https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/program/zauzmi-stranu/>