



How our views affect individuals and society

Total time: About 60 minutes depending on nr of groups. You can split this session into two.

Format: Group work and short presentations

Group size: Works best with four to seven small groups

Materials: Something for groups to note ideas on

Objective

Have students reflect on how our views of leaders and followers affect individuals and society.

Preparation

A few days before the session, ask students to observe how the word "leader" is used around them – among friends and family, on social media, in the news, in podcasts and books. For example, is the term used to describe decision-makers (people who make decisions) or something else? What do people expect leaders to do and how do they expect them to be? When are leaders seen as heroes and when are they seen as problems?

If possible, have students write down quotes they find particularly interesting.

Instructions

- 1) Divide the class into small groups and have them share some of their findings. **(5 – 10 min)**
- 2) Give each group a different domain: the workplace, politics, school, sport, family, social media, history – whatever you find relevant. Each group examines its domain and prepares a short presentation on three questions:
 - a) How are leaders portrayed within this domain?
 - b) What is expected of everyone else?
 - c) What are the consequences of those expectations? For example, if we expect leaders to motivate followers, what does that imply about followers?

(15 – 20 min)

Facilitators note: The aim here is not to diminish the role of leaders but to have the students review potential side-effects of the one-sided focus on leadership.

- 3) Presentation: Each group presents their conclusion for their domain (2-3 min per group).
- 4) Discussion and reflection (whole class):
 - a) Do the same expectations appear across the different domains?
 - b) When people expect a leader to make decisions, what happens to their own sense of responsibility and initiative?
 - c) Are there things we expect from leaders that we should be able to expect from followers too?
 - d) What might a group, or a society, gain if it valued good following as highly as good leading?