Active Learning Methods for FYS-Forums

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Participation in learning and decision-making

To be effective global citizens, learners need to be flexible, creative and proactive. They need to be able to solve problems, make decisions, think critically, communicate ideas effectively and work well within teams and groups. These skills and attributes are increasingly recognised as being essential to succeed in other areas of 21st century life too, including many workplaces.

These skills and qualities cannot be developed without the use of active learning methods which involve learning by doing and collaborating with others. But there are other reasons for promoting pupil participation in the learning process and in decision-making:

- Everything we do in school sends out messages, so we need to exemplify the values we wish to promote. If we wish to affirm beliefs about the equality of all human beings and the importance of treating everyone fairly and with respect, we need to ensure that learning processes, and relationships between learners and teachers, reflect and reinforce these values.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the right of children to have their opinions taken into account on matters that affect them.
- Research shows that in more democratic schools learners feel more in control of their learning, and the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour is better (see the UK Publication *Inspiring Schools: Impact and Outcomes: Taking up the Challenge of Pupil Participation*, Research Review for Carnegie Trust, 2006).

This does not mean that teachers have to develop new active learning experiences for every lesson. Neither does it mean doing away with clear boundaries – quite the opposite, in fact. The regular use of group or “circle” time, for example sitting in a circle participating an activity, in many schools is a perfect illustration of both these points.
The role of the teacher

In a participatory classroom environment the role of the teacher is often that of facilitator, supporting learners as they learn to assess evidence, negotiate, make informed decisions, solve problems and work both independently and with others. In creating an active classroom environment, the role of the teacher and the teaching environment shifts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-centred classroom</td>
<td>Learner-centred classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product-centred learning</td>
<td>Process-centred learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher as a transmitter of knowledge</td>
<td>Teacher as an organiser of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher as a ‘doer’ for learners</td>
<td>Teacher as an ‘enabler’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-specific focus</td>
<td>Holistic learning focus</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source (UK): Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3 ©2007 The Partnership Management Board

The role of the learners

The active, participatory classroom should result in a shift in the role of learners, too:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive recipients of knowledge</td>
<td>Active and participatory learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>Asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being spoon-fed</td>
<td>Taking responsibility for their own learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing with one another</td>
<td>Collaborating in their learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to have their own say</td>
<td>Actively listening to the opinions of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning individual subjects</td>
<td>Connecting their learning</td>
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</table>

Source (UK): Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3 ©2007 The Partnership Management Board

Reflect

You and your learners will be at different stages of experience, confidence and skill development in relation to active methodologies. This needs to be factored into the planning of lessons. Consider the following:

- What have been the group’s experiences of this type of learning before?
- Where have you employed learning strategies before in your teaching? What did you learn?
- How comfortable do you feel in this type of classroom?
- What further skills do you need? How might you develop them?
**Asking questions**

**Guidelines**
- Learners should be helped to recognise different kinds of question and think about their merits.
- Learners should be encouraged to examine their own assumptions. You can help them do this by continually asking them ‘Why?’ and ‘What do you mean by that?’
- You should also help learners to distinguish between factual questions and those whose answers will involve beliefs or opinions, whether ethical, moral, political or spiritual. Images and artefacts are useful for stimulating learners’ questions.

**Why-why-why chain**

**What is it?**
This tool gets learners thinking beyond surface impressions to the underlying causes of any issue. It can be a highly effective way of linking the local to the global with little or no steering by the teacher, other than to keep asking questions beginning with the word ‘why’.

**Classroom set-up**
Best done in pairs or threes, or as a whole-class discussion activity. Flip-chart or sugar paper, and pens or sticky notes are useful.

**How is it done?**
1. Write the issue in a box at the left-hand side of the page. Then ask learners to think of all the direct reasons for the issue. These should be written (or drawn) in boxes in a neighbouring column, linked to the issue box by arrows.
2. Ask learners to think through the possible reasons behind this first set of reasons. Each reason may have more than one contributing factor. Repeat the process as many times as the issue will allow, each time starting a new column to the right of the previous one. The end result is a flow chart which highlights the complexity of an issue and the different scales of causation. You could then ask learners to distinguish between links that they can support with evidence and those that they cannot.
3. Once the process has gone as far as it can, look at the boxes on the right-hand side, and encourage learners to ask: ‘Is it fair that this is happening?’ and ‘What can be done to change things?’.
Interrogating photographs

What is it?
Photographs can be hugely influential in shaping our ideas about ourselves, other people and the wider world. However, the pictures we see do not always tell the whole story. Images in the media can often be one-sided or perpetuate negative stereotypes. So visual literacy is arguably as important to learners as text literacy. The following activity gets learners questioning photographs (or artefacts), as well as their own assumptions about them.

Classroom set-up
Learners work in groups of three or four. Each group will require table space.

How is it done?
Learners look carefully at the photograph or artefact and discuss what they know about it. They then consider what they would like to know, and write down all the questions that they can think of (the photograph or artefact could be placed on a piece of sugar paper and the questions written around it). You can then use the Route Finder tool (see ‘A further tool for stimulating questions’ on page 4) to categorise the questions and see if there are any lines of questioning that the learners have not addressed.

To encourage learners to question their assumptions about a photograph, you could ask:
• Where is this place? Is it in the UK? Why do you think that?
• What is happening beyond the frame?
• Why do you think that? Learners could lay the photograph in the middle of a sheet of plain paper and draw what they think lies beyond the frame around it. Alternatively, if you want to compare learners’ ideas with the reality shown in the photograph, you could reveal just a section of the original image and ask them to extend it.
• What happened before the picture was taken and what might have happened afterwards? Why do you think that?
**Issue tree**

**What is it?**
This is a way of structuring an enquiry to encourage learners to explore the causes, effects (or symptoms) and solutions of a given issue.

**Classroom set-up**
This activity is best done in groups but can be completed individually.

**How is it done?**
- Learners draw a fruit tree in outline.
- They then label the trunk with the chosen issue, the roots with the causes of the issue, the branches with the effects (or symptoms) of the issue, and the fruit with possible solutions to the issue.
- This activity can be carried out either before learners research the issue, as a way of representing what they already know, or at the end of their research as a way of presenting their findings.
Making connections

Guidelines

• Themes common to young people’s lives throughout the world – such as water, food, transport, homes, school, waste, conflict and play – make good starting points. They focus learners’ minds on the things they share with young people in other countries, before they go on to consider their different experiences of these aspects of life.

• The concept of a journey is very useful in making local–global connections. The journeys of both people and goods (for example, bananas) demonstrate vividly the meaning of global interdependence.

• Connections also need to be made between issues. Investigating any issue, such as inequality, of both local and global significance usually reveals a web of connections that involve other important factors.

• While you should avoid oversimplifying complex global issues, there are still many useful connections to be made between global concerns and everyday classroom life; for example, parallels can be drawn between sharing equipment and social justice.

Consequences wheel

What is it?
A consequences wheel is a type of mind-map which can help learners think through the consequences of an event, action or issue. As well as making connections between cause and effect, consequences wheels can also help learners appreciate the global significance of local actions, and the local significance of global issues or trends.

Classroom set-up
This activity can be done individually, in small groups or as a whole class.

How is it done?
1. Learners write the main event or action inside a circle in the middle of the page.
2. Learners write each direct consequence of the event inside another circle, which is linked to the main circle with a single line. Learners try to think of as many direct consequences as possible. These should be arranged in a circle around the main circle.
3. Learners then consider the consequences of these consequences. These are once again written inside circles, linked to the direct consequences – and so on. Learners can colour each circle depending on whether the consequence is good or bad.
4. Go through the learners’ assumptions with them and ask whether they are justified. Discuss with learners how they can find out more about the facts.
5. Further discussion could involve looking more deeply at the issues that have arisen, and getting learners to think about what could be done to break chains of negative consequences.

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Less wear and tear on roads
Fewer carbon emissions
Less choice of foods to eat
Less choice of foods to eat
Reduces distances travelled by food (‘food miles’)
Mysteries

What are they?
Mysteries involve learners piecing together ‘clues’ written on separate pieces of paper to answer a question. They are an excellent tool for developing thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as literacy, but they are also very good for exploring global interconnectedness.

Classroom set-up
This activity is best undertaken in small groups. Each group will need a large enough surface to move around up to 30 cards.

How are they done?
1. Ideally, mystery activities are based on real-life scenarios. Newspaper stories can provide all the information you need to devise your own.
2. Explain to learners that their task is to solve a mystery, and tell them the central question that they have to answer. Explain that they will be given a set of clues, some of which may be more useful than others. Emphasise that it is not enough just to solve the mystery – they will need to be ready to explain how they solved it to the rest of the group (or in writing). You may want to provide them with a structure to clarify their reasoning – perhaps in the form of a writing frame or a why-why-why chain diagram (see page 4).
3. After the group discussion, groups should present and justify their answers, using the evidence before them. Discuss the causes and effects they have noted and the connections they have made. You could also ask learners how they went about sorting their information, and how they worked in their groups to arrive at a decision.
4. This activity should ideally be followed by a discussion of how learners themselves could respond to the issue (see pages 11-12 for ideas).

The example below gets learners engaging with the complex nature of global issues. There were several factors behind the closure of Runa’s stall, while there are good reasons why Shafraz is driven to school despite the environmental impact. While the activity presents the issue at a personal level, the point is not to blame a global problem on one person’s actions, but to show how the actions of many people, in different places, contribute to both the problem and the solutions. This needs emphasising, to ensure that learners are not left feeling guilty about the world’s problems.

Example: Why did Runa’s stall close down? Or, alternatively: How are the lives of Shafraz and Runa connected?

Shafraz is driven to school each day in his parents’ car.

Bangladesh is in South Asia. It is one of ten countries most at risk from sea levels rising.

Runa’s stall has had to close down.

Shafraz lives two kilometres from his school in Sparkbrook, Birmingham.

Tourists come to Cox’s Bazaar for the sandy beaches.

Cox’s Bazaar is a resort on the south-eastern coast of Bangladesh.

Recent stormy weather has made it harder for cars, buses and trucks to come into Cox’s Bazaar.

Sea levels are rising as a result of climate change.

Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas which contributes to climate change.

Runa sells fruit and vegetables to tourists, commuters and truck drivers travelling in and out of Cox’s Bazaar.

Last week, Runa’s stall was flooded for the second time.

Bad storms and rain have been damaging the road leading into Cox’s Bazaar.

Runa’s stall is on a main road leading into Cox’s Bazaar. The road is less than 0.5m above sea level.

Bangladesh is in South Asia. It is one of ten countries most at risk from sea levels rising.

Climate change is believed to increase the risk of extreme weather.

Shafraz’s parents say Sparkbrook’s traffic makes it too dangerous to walk or cycle to school.

Birmingham’s traffic is mostly made up of cars.

Cars produce carbon dioxide from the burning of petrol.

The morning bus to Shafraz’s school is often held up in heavy traffic.

Source: This is based on an activity in ‘Lessons in Sustainability’, Tide~Global Learning, 2003
Exploring viewpoints and values

Guidelines

- Establish ground rules which create a safe environment for learners to express opinions. Ideally, the class will help draw up these ground rules, as this will encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning process.
- Discussions do not have to reach conclusions or consensus.
- Splitting the class into small groups can help less confident learners express their opinions. Consider having the members of each group assign themselves roles, for example, note-taker, timekeeper, spokesperson.
- Consider your own role carefully. The box to the right provides some guidance.

Opinion continuum

What is it?

This is a simple way of encouraging learners to think through their position on two opposing views about an issue. It is a helpful means of exploring complex issues and diverse viewpoints.

Classroom set-up

At its most basic, this activity only requires space for a continuous line (real or imagined) from one side of the classroom to the other. An alternative approach is to hang a line of string (at around waist height) between two facing walls, and invite learners to come to the line one at a time and use pegs to mark their opinions.

How is it done?

These guidelines should enable everyone to take part in a calm way:

1. Introduce the opinion that you want learners to consider, for example, ‘People should have to pay for plastic bags in shops’ and outline two opposite positions (strongly agree vs strongly disagree). Explain that everyone’s view will fall somewhere along the line, and that there are not necessarily any right or wrong answers.
2. Explain the rules, such as learners choose whether to participate or not; the person taking their place on the line is the only person talking; no reactions – verbal or otherwise – from the rest of the group.
3. Any learner may begin by taking a position on the line that represents their view. The volunteer says a few words to the class about why they have taken that position. The process is repeated, with selected learners expressing their opinions one at a time.
4. If some learners are reluctant to take part, you could suggest that they mark their position on the line without saying anything.
5. When everyone who wants to has spoken, tell learners they can change their position on the line without saying anything.
6. Debrief the learners. How many learners changed their positions? What led them to change their minds? What have they gained from this process?

To encourage learners to practise negotiation skills, you could divide them into groups and ask them to come to a group view. Each group can then send one representative to identify the place on the line that best represents the group view. This is also easier in terms of classroom management, with fewer learners out of their seats at any one time.
Role play

What is it?
Role play needs little introduction. It is a versatile device that can take a variety of forms and can be effective for all ages.

Classroom set-up
This will depend on the form of role play used. But it will often require a classroom arrangement where learners can easily work in small groups.

How is it done?
Role play based on stories is just one way of enabling learners to see the world through other people’s eyes. Here are two possible approaches:

- **Freeze frame and thought-tracking:**
  Learners listen to part of a story and then act it out. They freeze the action at certain points and discuss what they are doing and feeling. They then consider what is going to happen next. They can then act out their predictions and refer to the story to see what really happened. This approach works well with stories of real people from history and the present.

- **Hot-seating:**
  This is a good way to develop questioning skills as well as to explore values and viewpoints. Learners decide on questions that they would like to ask one of the characters in the story. Then one pupil takes the ‘hot seat’, playing the part of that character, and the others take turns to ask their questions.

With all forms of role play, the debrief is crucial. This involves learners stepping out of role to explore what they felt when they were in the role, and why.

Critical thinking online

What is it?
This is simply an approach to using the internet that encourages learners to look critically at websites. Like any other source of information, websites need handling carefully and critically. Often what is presented as fact actually represents just one viewpoint or set of values.

Classroom set-up
This activity can work with any classroom arrangement but assumes access to an internet connection.

How is it done?
You could provide a simple template for learners to use whenever they visit a website, or you could ask older learners to devise their own list of questions that they can use to evaluate websites. Questions might include:

- Who runs the website?
- What are their aims?
- What impression does the website give of the organisation/person behind it? How does it do this?
- What message is the website trying to communicate? How does it use language and images to do this?
- Does the website present more fact or opinion?
- How do you react to the website? Why?
- Who is providing information?

Further tools for exploring viewpoints and values

Simulation games
These can be highly engaging and provide rich opportunities for deep learning about global issues. There are many available at www.globaldimension.org.uk

Participatory Learning, Schools for Future Youth
An excellent list of participatory learning methods for encouraging critical thinking, open dialogue and discussion in formal and non-formal learning environments. See www.sfyouth.eu for free resources.

Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry
A very useful method for developing ‘critical literacy’. See www.osdemethodology.org.uk for guidance materials and classroom resources.

Further guidance on exploring views and values can be found in the free Oxfam publication, Teaching Controversial Issues, which can be downloaded at www.oxfam.org.uk/guides
Responding as active global citizens

Guidelines

Bear in mind that education for global citizenship does not involve telling people what they should do. Instead, it helps learners to think critically through all the options open to them.

• Encourage learners to consider the global effects of local actions, perhaps using the consequences wheel described on page 7.
• Be aware that deciding not to do something is still an action, and will have consequences just like any other course of action.
• Always encourage learners to think in terms of responsible action that takes account of the law, school policies and ethical considerations. They will need to think through all the possible consequences of their actions. Again, the consequences wheel could be used here.
• An important part of the learning process is to reflect on what has been learned through action.
• Active global citizenship is political, in that it involves making decisions about whether something should be changed and how that change should come about. However, it should not follow a party-political line, as that would compromise the critical thinking and questioning which are central to global citizenship.

Ideal futures

What is it?

This is a mind-mapping tool, based on work by UK Professor David Hicks, that encourages learners to express their ideas – both positive and negative – about the future. It can be used to explore the future generally, at personal, local, national and global levels (remembering that these are all interrelated). It can also be used to look at a specific issue, for example, the development of biofuels, GM crops or global inequalities.

Classroom set-up

This activity is suitable for most classroom arrangements as it is best carried out as a personal reflection activity – although personal responses can be then be charted as a whole class.

How is it done?

Learners draw a time line, going back as far as necessary for the issue in question. The line forks at the present (see diagram). On the lower time line, learners place the things they think will probably happen in relation to the issue. These can be represented in a variety of ways such as words, drawings or cut-out images. Meanwhile, along the upper time line, learners can add the things they would prefer to happen.

In debriefing, discuss the following questions:

• What changes are most likely to happen?
• What would you personally prefer to see happen?
• Who else shares such a vision of the future?
• What needs to change if the preferable future is to become a reality, rather than the probable one? Who is actually working to create such a future? How can we contribute to that preferable future?
River timeline

What is it?
This is an action-planning tool to help learners chart progress towards a chosen goal.

Classroom set-up
This activity needs large surfaces for groups to work around.

How is it done?
Learners sketch the shape of a river on a large sheet of paper. This activity can also be done as a whole class, using several pieces of flip-chart or sugar paper stuck together. The river represents the steps towards achieving a particular goal, in chronological order. The source of the river is the situation now and the mouth of the river is the goal. Tributaries joining the river represent the actions that need to be taken, in the appropriate order. Potential obstacles can be shown as boulders, waterfalls and whirlpools. The river can be added to as progress towards the goal continues.

Action card ranking

What is it?
This activity encourages learners to brainstorm various options for taking action, and think through their relative merits. It develops respect for others and skills of co-operation, critical thinking and decision-making.

Classroom set-up
Learners will need to be able to work in groups of three or four, and each group will need table space on which to move around nine action cards.

How is it done?
1. Groups identify up to nine possible actions that they could take in response to an issue. They write each action on a separate sticky note (or piece of paper). Alternatively, they can work with nine ‘ready-made’ options – these can be either generic and broadly applicable to most issues (see example), or specific to the issue. When using ready-made cards, include some blank cards so learners can substitute their own ideas for those on the cards.
2. Emphasise that there is no right or wrong answer – there will be advantages and disadvantages to every option, and learners should rank them as they think best. Explain how groups are expected to feed back their responses – for example, their top three choices with reasons, or their top and bottom choices with reasons.
3. Groups then rank their options in a diamond formation, as shown below. When most groups have agreed on their formation, stop the class and ask for feedback. Explore the choices they have made and their reasons for them. Finally, discuss the criteria they used to make their decisions, for example, feasibility, appropriateness, effectiveness or cost.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diamond nine ranking</th>
<th>The best action is to lobby (put our arguments to) someone in a powerful position, for example, write a letter or an email, send a petition or an opinion survey, or visit them.</th>
<th>The best action is to find out which organisations can help us, and join their local, national or global campaigns.</th>
<th>The best action is to perform a play on how the issue affects people, for example, in assembly, or in other schools.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The best action is to use social media to raise awareness and inspire others to take action.</td>
<td>The best action is to make a leaflet, poster or collage on the issue and display it to people in school and in the local community.</td>
<td>The best action is to make different choices about your life based on what you have learned, for example, change what you eat, wear and spend money on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of diamond nine ranking is to provoke discussion or reflection about the relative importance of a range of factors. This method of ranking can be used in many different contexts where there is a need to define, prioritise or make decisions. For example, it could be used to evaluate nine different definitions of ‘development’, or to select classroom rules.
Assessing learning

Guidelines

• Assessment for learning is the aim here, so assessment is best interwoven throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, the activities below can also aid summative assessment.

• Always be specific about what you are assessing – and ask learners to be specific about what they want to assess.

• Assessment is best seen as a partnership activity, bringing together the perspectives of both teacher and learners.

• Peer assessment can be invaluable, as long as there are clear ground rules and assessment criteria for learners to follow (which they can help devise). Such assessment makes learners much more conscious of what makes for high-quality work, and of what they could do to improve.

Know – Want to Know – Learnt (KWL)

This simple tool can be used at any stage of a sequence of learning activities on a particular issue or topic. It enables learners to document their present level of knowledge and what gaps may exist in that knowledge, to structure progress in their learning and to analyse what new information has been learned after research. If K-W-L is carried out in groups, it can also consolidate communication skills and teamwork.

On a K-W-L grid (see below), learners write under ‘K’ what they think they already know about a particular topic or issue. If learners are working in groups, they may wish to use sticky notes to gather their thoughts before writing their combined ideas onto the grid. Learners are then encouraged to think about the gaps in their knowledge by filling out what they want to know in the ‘W’ column. Once the topic is completed (or at a suitable point during the topic) learners return to their grids to complete the ‘L’ column and compare what they have learnt with the content of the ‘K’ and ‘W’ columns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K - KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do we already know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likert scales

Likert scales consist of a range of positions between two opposites. They can be used for a wide variety of purposes, including participatory assessment. You can use as many or as few scales as you wish. The global citizenship skills chart (below) shows how a series of Likert scales can easily be compiled into a self-assessment tool. Before drawing the scales, you may want to discuss with learners the measures they think should be assessed, although it may be easier to give them a ready-made chart and ask them to suggest changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global citizenship skills chart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked well as part of a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed to discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listened to other opinions easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills gained:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas for improvement:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Evaluation wheel**

An evaluation wheel shows the extent to which particular objectives were met. This activity can be done either individually or in groups.

Two concentric circles are divided into segments, each segment representing a different indicator, for example, skills used or actions completed.

Learners colour in more or less of each segment of the inner circle to show how successfully each indicator has been met. The outer wedge can be used for comments.

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**Further tools**

**Expression cards**

Learners write comments on cards and put them into a postbox in the classroom. Sentence starters are a useful way of framing comments, for example, 'I learnt that...', 'I want to learn more about...'. Pick a card from the box, and use it as a basis for discussion.

**Traffic lights**

Learners use red, amber and green cards to communicate how well they understand.

**Global Citizenship in the EU**

If you would like to learn more about how to embed global citizenship education into your teaching and across the whole school including evaluation tools, check out *Schools for Future Youth*, an EU funded, participatory global learning project implemented in the UK, Poland, Italy and Cyprus. Available in English, Polish, Greek and Italian from *Schools for Future Youth*: [www.sfyouth.eu](http://www.sfyouth.eu)
The Active Learning Methods for FYS-Forums is based on Oxfam GB’s publication ‘Global Citizenship in the Classroom - A Guide for Teachers’. The original Guide can be downloaded for free, in full, at www.oxfam.org.uk/guides.

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