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## Playing stakeholders: Experiencing decision making procedures on national and supranational levels

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# PLAYING STAKEHOLDERS: EXPERIENCING DECISION MAKING PROCEDURES ON NATIONAL AND SUPRANATIONAL LEVELS



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## Abstract

The European Union is a unique “postnational construction” (Habermas 1998) which is much more integrated than other international institutions. Nevertheless, it is not a country with some sort of nation-wide history or culture. In its core, it is a union of different member states serving as a platform for common decisions. Citizens of the EU are both citizens of the national state and of the European Union. Its uniqueness and complexity makes the EU to a didactic and pedagogical challenge (Tafner 2012): Firstly, introductory lessons usually present the topic EU from a legal perspective. But legal topics can be boring or at least confusing for nonexperts. Secondly, these introductions are very cognitive and completely ignoring the affective element although discussions about the EU are very emotional. The simulation game “Building Blocks of Democracy: My Country. Your Country. Our Union.”, which was created by young students in a project cofinanced by the European Union, provides a different approach for introducing the idea of supranationalism, focusing on dealing with different cultures, interests, and identities, thereby promoting competences that are necessary to deal efficiently and effectively with those differences when they occur. In this simulation game students experience how even fictitious cultures they have created on their own have an influence on the decision making process and undergo democratic decision making procedures on different levels. This article delivers an insight into the simulation game and explains performative pedagogy as a way to foster competences individually. After the theoretical part selected results of a research project financed by the State of Styria (Austria) carried out in the school year 2011/12 in 12 different schools at 16 different playing dates with 289 students involved are presented. The results were quite positive and the simulation game is now ready for regular usage in schools.

## Introduction

The European Union as the center of the European integration is neither a new state nor a traditional international organization. Supranationality is a quite new, complex and abstract phenomenon. Teachers prefer to teach this topic in a very traditional way but the students' demand is higher than the teachers' supply (Tafner/Sorko 2010). Complexity and abstractness are the challenges – experiential learning and performative pedagogy are potential answers. This article builds on performative pedagogy and presents a simulation game as a successful new approach to experience and reflect the idea of supranationalism. An evaluation of the game simulation delivers positive results.

## Performative Pedagogy

The main objective of simulation games is the acquirement of competences through the training of the ability to make decisions (Seeber 2007, p. 155) in order to achieve cognitive and affective objectives (Rebmann 2001). The correlation of pedagogical input and individual output in a given situation is not always clear. Education is something that also occurs inside an individual (Slepcevic-Zach & Tafner 2011, p. 177): “The human being is no trivial machine (Heinz von Foerster), in which the input is converted to output with a given rule. The human being is always a non-trivial machine because s/he reacts on inputs with self-reference. The instructor can never be sure how the student is really processing the input. Positively formulated, one could say that the learner's reaction to input is self-determined. Negatively formulated, the learner's reaction to input could be described as unreliable. The transformation from input to output is contingent” (Luhmann 2004, p. 14f). With Robinsohn's (1967) curriculum theory and the operationalization of learning outcomes (Bloom 1976), didactic approaches and processes are sometimes misunderstood as pure technological procedures (Zabeck 2004, p. 135). Even activity-oriented didactics, which focuses on case studies, projects, and simulation games can lead to the temptation to describe learning as a clear correlation of input and output (Zabeck 2004, p. 106).

Students and instructors do have different perceptions of situations and the solution of problems. Their strategies depend on enculturation, socialization and personalization (Slepcevic-Zach & Tafner 2011, p. 177–179). Situations are not objectively given and, therefore, individual interpretation is needed (Esser 2005). Competence oriented instruction should not be misunderstood as a return to the operationalization of learning outcomes (Dubs 2006, Slepcevic-Zach & Tafner 2012, p. 33f). With performative pedagogy, the personal behavior and the unique handling of a given situation is getting more important. Not only “what is represented in the representation” is important for pedagogy but also “the way in which the representation is handled, and the practices of representing respectively. [...] A performative view refuses a general and total method and understanding of reality but opens a relative and contextual interpretation which shows a plurality of idiomatic gestures and contextual types of phenomenology.” (Wulf & Zirfas 2007, p. 9, translation by the authors) Performative pedagogy is a result of the performative and cultural turn which took root in sociology, cultural studies and pedagogy. In this approach, culture is

understood as knowledge- and meaning-oriented. Artifacts, processes and ideas are carriers of culture. Culture has an influence on all parts of life and on individually and collectively thinking and acting. (Moebius 2010, p. 77–80 and p. 123–126) The pluralism of methods, interdisciplinarity and unorthodoxy is getting more and more important (Bachmann-Medick 2009). The simulation game is a pedagogical method, which can be used within the framework of performative pedagogy. Performative pedagogy replaces a general method of reality with a relatively context-oriented interpretation. (Wulf & Zirfas 2007, p. 9) There are four arguments backing the importance of performative pedagogy (Wulf & Zirfas 2007, p. 10–12):

1. Self-development gains importance in society; pedagogy as a kind of activity-oriented science needs to be up to date and follows this trend.
2. Methods like phenomenology and constructivism gain relevance for describing rituals, situations, and activities.
3. Social and pedagogical activities can be described in a performative way.
4. This leads to a complex theory of education which focuses on the individual.

Every human being takes over different roles and carries them out. A politician or a manager of a company plays his/her role. In this sense, game and reality cannot be separated and game is always a part of reality. People can never leave the so-called “Lebenswelt” (lifeworld) which refers to shared cultural meanings and social dimensions as a basis for mutual understanding (Habermas 1987a and 1987b). The consequence: What students experience in game simulations can be helpful in their future private and professional lives.

### **Contents and Objectives of the Simulation Game**

In the simulation game the students are stakeholders (citizens and ministers) of four different democratic countries. Four groups of students represent four countries which are situated on the fictitious Planet XY and are members of the newly-created Union.

The objectives of the game are threefold (Ferstl, Füzi, Tafner & Wunsch-Grafton, 2010, p. 4):

1. to do their best for their own country and for the Union in creating a socio-economic environment which best supports the life of the citizens,
2. to collect as many „Building Blocks of Democracy“ as possible for their own country and the Union, and
3. to keep the countries’ budgets and the Union’s budget balanced.

The game proceeds in six phases (Ferstl et al., 2010, p. 8–25):

**Phase 1** – Theoretical introduction: Before the game starts the participants should be able to conceptualize general procedures of democracy and group decisions. Complex pedagogical methods, in which group works play a decisive role, can fail if essential core competences like the basics of communication, emotional intelligence, or

team building are not given (Gueldenzoph Snyder, 2010). Teachers playing simulation games must be fully aware of these prerequisites. The simulation game focuses on three bunches of competences: cooperation and negotiation competence, transcultural competence, and democratic supranational competence. The arrangement of this phase depends on the pedagogical focus of the simulation game and the previous knowledge of the players. Necessary terms and definitions of democracy should be explained to make sure that these terms do not cause any difficulties, once they enter the debate.

**Phase 2 – Group dynamic exercises:** The participants should be activated with group dynamic games in advance to strengthen their capacity for teamwork. The quantity and the sort of games should be adapted for the group members.

**Phase 3 – Introduction to the simulation game:** The rules and the process of the simulation game should be explained. Materials and a PowerPoint presentation are available for this phase.

**Phase 4 – Identification:** This essential phase represents the start of the game. The players receive the descriptions of their countries and their tasks. The participants have to create the history, culture and traditions of their own country, as well as design their national flag. They create the topography of their state with materials available. Using so called Job Cards each group has to decide on the president and ministers. This phase ends with the foundation ceremony of the Union and the players present their countries to the other groups in a short ceremony accompanied with the Union's anthem and the ceremonial signing of the Union's Treaty.

**Phase 5 – Playing the game:** This phase can be repeated twelve times. At the beginning of every turn the instructor assigns Trigger Event Cards to each group explaining a specific situation of conflicts of interests. The topics of the events trigger personal involvement. Decisions are made under budget constraints because all measures taken must be paid for. Group decisions have an influence on the other countries and the following events.

If all states have found a solution strategy, the responsible ministers of each country sit down at the Council's table to find a common solution for the Union. After the discussion ministers have to vote. They can vote unanimously or their decisions are determined by a majority of votes (three ministers out of four). If the ministers voted on a majority vote, each minister gets one Building Block of Democracy in the color of the country. If they voted unanimously, each minister gets three blocks. Afterwards all ministers return to their states and each state has to discuss and to decide whether they will receive the blocks on behalf of their own country or of the Union depending on how they feel about the outcome of their negotiation: If they feel the outcome mainly benefitted the Union, the Building Block(s) should be located on the field for the Union. If the outcome mainly benefitted their home-country, the Building Block(s) should be placed on the field for their own country. The Building Blocks of Democracy which are assigned to their own country should be situated on one field of the paper which is called "on behalf of the country" and the blocks which are assigned to the Union should be situated on the other field of the paper which is called "on behalf of the Union". In the course of the game – the towers on both sides of the paper – are getting higher and higher.

The towers that are generated with these blocks play an important role in the reflection of the simulation game because they visually reveal how often the groups have decided either for the Union or their own country (see phase 6 – Debriefing and Reflection). At the end of phase 5 the groups present their towers on behalf of/in the interests of the country on one side, and on the behalf of/in the interests of the Union on the other side, and they give a short explanation about their decisions.

**Phase 6 – Debriefing and Reflection:** The starting point is the reflection about the distribution of the Building Bricks of Democracy and how they were assigned to the fields of interests. Then all the bricks on behalf of the Union are placed on each. As every country has its own color, the colors of the bricks reveal how much each group thinks that they have invested for the Union. Hereafter, all towers on behalf of/in the interests of the country are put on top of each other. Again, the colors show how much each group believed they have invested but this time for their own country. The heights of the towers show how often the countries have decided for their own and how often for the Union. There is no right and wrong only a good starting point for a deeper reflection about different interests, trade-offs, and conflicts of interests.

Following this discussion, each group has to brainstorm which factors were helpful and which were detrimental in the decision making process. The two most helpful and most detrimental ones are presented to the plenum where the eight most important factors are collected and discussed. The instructor should sum up and close the discussion by drawing an analogy to the decision making process of the European Union and the democratic decision procedure in general.

## **Fostering Competences**

There are many definitions of competences and “there is no basis for a theoretically grounded definition or classification from the seemingly endless inventory of the ways the term competence is used” (Weinert, 2001, p. 46). Weinert (2001) defines competence as "a roughly specialized system of abilities, proficiencies, or skills that are necessary to reach a specific goal. This can be applied to individual dispositions or to the distribution of such dispositions within a social group or an institution".

According to Kaufhold (2006, p. 22–24), there are four characteristics of competence-orientation: First, competence always refers to a particular context, to a specific situation. Second, acting occurs in this situation and part of the competence is observable and visible. Third, competence is always related to an individual. Fourth, competences are learnable and teachable and are considered to be relatively stable over a period of time but nevertheless changeable. The second characteristic states that part of the competence is observable and visible. Competence can be described as an individual asset which can be used by the acting person. Performance is the process and the output generated by applying competence. Therefore, only the performance is measurable not the competence (Slepcevic-Zach & Tafner, 2011, p. 180). If a performance is good, one can assume that it is based on acquired competences. But one can never be sure. To sum up: “Competence is a hypothetical asset of knowledge and skills which can be used by a person in a concrete situation to responsibly solve a

problem. Competence as such is not observable but performance is the visible output of competence.” (Tafner, 2011, p. 140, authors’ translation)

### ***Cooperation and Negotiation Competence***

The term cooperation competence is applied differently and is often used as an umbrella term for different competences that relate to the micro, meso, and macro level. The simulation game focuses on the micro and the meso level. On the micro level, individual performances like communication and emotional competences are fostered. On the meso level, the focus lies on teamwork and the competence of the whole team. Part of the team’s competence is the group’s decision making competence. Important decisions are rarely made alone. In the ideal case, discourse ethics serve as the basic principle of discussions (Oelsnitz & Graf, 2006, p. 88–91). Tetems (2010, p. 161–170) defined the most important moral principle of discourse ethics in order to make decisions fair and rational:

- Define and clarify the problem, questions and issues.
- Opinions must be clearly and comprehensively stated.
- Each statement should be uttered to the best of one’s knowledge.
- Each member of the group is free to say his/her opinion and can express his/her concerns.
- Each opinion should be equally verified.
- Opinions of stakeholders who cannot participate should be considered as well.
- At the end of the discussion each group member should adopt the group’s opinion because it is legitimated by discourse ethics.

Often, negotiating is necessary in discussions. But people do not like to negotiate and they find themselves in a situation where they have to choose between the soft or hard way of negotiating. The Harvard method of negotiating follows a different way: “The method of principled negotiation is hard on the merits, soft on the people. It employs no tricks and no posturing” (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1999, XIII–XIV). There should be no winners or losers after a negotiation but a wise agreement (if an agreement is possible). The relationship between the negotiators should not be hurt and the process should be efficient. Focusing on the following principles helps to make negotiating successful (Fisher et al., 1999, p. 11):

- “People: separate the people from the problem.
- Interests: focus on interests, not positions.
- Options: Generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do.
- Criteria: Insist that the result must be based on some objective standards.”

When playing the simulation game cooperation and decision making are decisive on the micro and meso level. Good decisions can only be made if the team is able to cooperate. Cooperation performance is visible in the country and on the supranational level of the simulation game.

## ***Transcultural Competence***

According to Berger (1973, p. 7) everything that men create is culture („Totalität des menschlichen Hervorbringens“) and can be understood as their second nature. In general, culture is like water for the fish, a matter of course but indefinable. Habermas (1981, p. 449–551) talked about the human environment (“Lebenswelt“) which is so evident that the human being cannot easily talk about it. Gibson (2000, p. 16) referred to an iceberg when he explains culture. Cultural phenomena like clothes, music, food, or language are perceivable, which means they are over the water in terms of the iceberg analogy. But the values, world views, beliefs, and perceptions are not directly accessible, which means that they are under the water in terms of the iceberg analogy.

Hofstede (2009, p. 5) defined culture as a catchword for mental software that influences our thinking, acting, and feeling. This mental program distinguishes groups.

Nations are one of these many groups. Nations do have an influence on the citizens, but today’s nations are not as homogenous as they once were. “In research on cultural differences, nationality – the passport one holds – should therefore be used with care” (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 21). Nevertheless, Hofstede’s research mainly focused on nationality. Understanding nations as homogenous cultures is normative and can lead to ethnocentrism (Bennett 1993). Culture is a collective phenomenon on different levels. Business culture, family culture, youth culture etc. are important topics in scientific community (Moebius 2010, p. 7). When people get in contact, worlds are colliding. This is the case in one and the same culture because everyone has an own personal mental system which makes everyone somehow a Robinson Crusoe (Kumbier & Schulz von Thun, 2010, p. 9). Therefore, everyone is entitled to human rights, a life in dignity and freedom: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and universal human rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood“ (UN, 1948, Art. 1).

To sum up: “Every man is, in certain respects, (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, (c) like no other man” (Kluckhohn & Murray, 1948, p. 35). First of all, everyone is a human being. All are entitled to the same dignity, freedom, and universal human rights. Second, human beings are like “some other men”. The common culture can be one reason for this, but it must not be understood normatively or in an ethnocentric way and cannot be restricted to the national origin. Third, everyone is unique. Labeling people is inhuman insofar as it undermines their dignity through inadequate categorizing. “Multi- and intercultural theories stick to the idea that cultures are homogenous entities and therefore are inherently normative. Transculturality assumes that cultures are open for mutual exchange and cultures can be described as hybrid, interlinked, and heterogeneous” (Tafner, 2011, authors’ translation). Globalization, Europeanization, pluralisms and individualisms make people more similar and culture is getting more hybrid (Welsch, 1999, p. 4). Transcultural competence is built on tolerance. Respect, openness, and a tolerance for ambiguity are necessary attitudes. Cultural self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness can lead to an effective and appropriate communication and behavior in an intercultural situation (Deardorff, 2009, p. 480).

The simulation game is transcultural: In general, the students share a quite similar cultural environment but play different roles in the game. Therefore, all players have somehow similar cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, there are differences because the self-invented culture is getting powerful and creates its own identity. The participants experience old and new, familiar and unfamiliar behaviors. Tolerating ambiguity and other transcultural competences must be applied.

### ***Democratic Supranational Competence***

In general, all democratic decisions follow the same procedures: in schools, enterprises, the community, in countries and in the European Union. The best way to learn democratic decision making is participating. Students participate as citizens and ministers in the game, and so they can experience being or not being successful in cooperating, negotiating, and making decisions. They feel what it means to represent a country and its ideas. “It is important to emphasize that a temporary role is not necessarily one that a person regards as unimportant or enacts lightly” (Ashfort 2001, p. 42–43). Therefore, the players identify themselves with their self-created cultures and the interests of their countries. They experience how difficult and how important cooperation is and how powerful different interests and cultures can be.

As young people do not have any experience with supranational activities at all, they have no idea about the pitfalls and possibilities of this kind of cooperation. Without having any experiences, it makes no sense to talk about the EU and other forms of less integrated international organizations. Everyone who has experienced supranational democratic decision process – even in a simulation game – has acquired more procedural knowledge than someone who has studied international and European law. The simulation game cannot substitute theoretical knowledge but can definitively promote a better understanding of the supranational idea and can be a starting point for deeper theoretical and practical insights.

### **Evaluating the Performative Outcome**

Because of their complexity, simulation games are not easy to evaluate (Rebmann 2011, p. 29). In this simulation game, roles and situations can be quite freely arranged and individual behavior and solutions are supported and welcomed. Therefore, a competence model that explains the content and the behavior on different levels of learning outcomes as a clear cause-and-effect-chain is not available. A mixed-methods-approach primarily composed of qualitative methods and triangulation was used in order to find out answers to the following three research questions:

1. Does the simulation game work as a method in school and can it be recommended for schools?
2. What are the individual and collective effects of the simulation game in the class room?
3. Is the simulation game appropriate for competence oriented education?

The methods of the evaluation

The following methods were applied for the evaluation of the simulation game:

M 1: Questionnaires for the teachers before the simulation game started

In order to find out how the teachers of the classes involved in the project think about simulation games, statements on a Likert scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” were given. Beyond that, they had to assess the students’ competences as discussed above on a grading scale.

M 2: Analysis of the results of the reflection in the simulation game

In the reflection (phase 6) of the simulation game, the students had to collect supporting and hindering factors for cooperation and decision making. The eight most important ones were written on a flipchart, photographed and categorized with a qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2010).

M 3: Observations of the teachers and the instructors of the simulation game

The teachers and the instructors were asked to write down their observations on one page. They did not get any further guidelines about the observation and the report. The triangulation taking place enabled a change of perspectives in order to reveal similarities and differences in the observations. There were only two instructors but they had seen 289 students playing in 16 different settings. The reports were categorized with the qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2010).

M 4: Questionnaires distributed to the students directly after having played the simulation game

The first question was an open one: “Please write down what you think about the simulation game right now.” The analysis was done with the qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2010). Beyond that, 15 statements on a four-point Likert scale about embedding, personal, democratic and supranational perceptions were asked.

M 5: Questionnaires for the students several weeks later

Statements concerning democratic and supranational perceptions were asked again some weeks later in order to compare them with the results after the game.

M 6: Qualitative e-mail-questionnaire six months after the game

Students of two schools got three open questions: Firstly, if you remember the simulation game, which situation comes to your mind first? Please describe the situation or picture. Secondly, when you think about your daily life routine, have you experienced situations in which you were thinking about the simulation game? Please describe a situation. Thirdly, imagine a student from your neighbor class asks you about the simulation game. What would you tell him/her?

M 7: Focus group with the teachers

At the end of the school year, the teachers participated in a focus group. At the beginning they got a questionnaire in order to assess the students’ competences again. Afterwards, the three research questions were asked and discussed in groups and in the plenum. After this, the results of the research project so far were presented and discussed in groups and in the plenum for a communicative validation.

## ***The Summarized Interpreted Results***

### M 1: Questionnaires for the teachers before the simulation game started

The majority of teachers were female (9 out of 14), teaching in business colleges (10 out of 14), longer than five years in schools (13 out of 14) and have already used simulation games in the class room (9 out of 14). Their attitudes towards the European Union are quite positive. Although, they believe that simulation games are a very good method for competence-oriented education they rarely apply it in the class room.

The competences of the students were assessed on a five-point Likert scale with a mean of 2.7 by their teachers. At the end of the school year the question was repeated and the competences were assessed with a mean of 1.7 (see also M 7). Apart from social expectations and teachers' positive self-assessment of the learning outcomes, this could be interpreted as a positive effect of the simulation game.

### M 2: Analysis of the results of the reflection in the simulation game

The students recognize without needing to be prompted that competences are decisive for successful discourses: 24% of the supporting factors can be summarized in the category "importance of negotiation and cooperation competences". This bunch of competences was indicated as the most important helpful factor. Its absence was described as the most hindering factor.

### M 3: Observations of the teachers and the instructors of the simulation game

The students worked "with joy", in a "serious" manner and "with enthusiasm" on the assignments, so that all students were involved: They identified themselves with the country and their roles. One teacher wrote: "It was good for me to see their creative side." Another teacher describes: The students "experienced how different the interests of the participants are and how difficult and time-consuming it is to convince others or to find a solution that fits for everyone." The mixture of performance and supranational topics is emphasized by another teacher: "As observer I think that this simulation game is very useful for the students because they could experience the problem of finding consensus in the group, in the own country, and in a common entity. And they recognized how complicated the decision making process between 27 member states is, in which you have to decide on behalf of the respective country and on behalf of the EU as a community." The instructors stated that it was not always easy for the teachers to confine themselves to observation. Teachers tend to intervene and to participate in the game. A teacher self critically wrote: "For me it was not easy to stay in the background. Sometimes I would have liked to participate in the discussions and to give some hints and suggestions." Though, the students were told that the teachers do not grade the participation in the simulation game, the instructors indicated that they sometimes felt a kind of pressure to perform. The instructors also noticed a difference in the performance of the students of business colleges and the other high schools: Students of business colleges tend to be less creative than the others. They more often ask if something is allowed or not.

M 4 and M 5: Questionnaires distributed to the students directly after having played the simulation game and several weeks later

The students indicated that they better understood national and supranational democracy after the simulation game. This was the case directly after the game and also several weeks later. The following table shows the statements and the arithmetic mean of the agreement with these statements. The four-point items were accompanied by visual analog scale (from 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree) clearly indicating equal spacing of response levels.

Table 1. Testing the results of debriefing and reflection.

Statements	Mean, N = 290, directly after the game	Mean, N = 179, several weeks after the game
Now I understand how democratic decisions are made.	1.5	1.7
I think that in reality democratic decisions are taken in a similar way to the game.	2.1	2.2
I think that in the real European Union different opinions are heavily discussed.	1.3	1.5
I think that in the real European Union the proposals for solutions differ among the Member States.	1.5	1.4
The game helped me to understand “democracy”.	1.7	1.9
I can imagine what happens in the European Union.	1.7	1.9
In future I will think more positive about participation, negotiation and democracy.	2.0	2.0

The results at two different points in time are reliable and show only marginal differences.

M 6: Qualitative e-mail-questionnaire six months after the game

Fun is a very important factor of simulation games. Answering question number 1, a student wrote: “I remember that I had so much fun. Especially, I remember the situation that the ministers were sitting at the table and discussing. This helped me to better understand the situation of politicians, especially with regard to the problem of trying to meet everyone’s demands. I believe that it is much more complicated in the EU because the wellbeing of many people depends on these decisions.” Another student wrote: “I remember the very intense discussions in the middle of the classroom because I found them very amusing and educational. I was minister of environment and because I am very much interested in environment in real life I got caught-up in the topic and could well represent my opinion! It was a lot of fun!” The answers to the second question show that it was much more than just pure fun: 16 out of 21 students stated

that they made quite a lot experiences. The topics were politics and democratic decisions as well as the European Union. Students also wrote that they overcame prejudices and gained a new understanding of politics. A student wrote: “My family was listening to the news at home and heard that a decision concerning EU-related issues could not be agreed upon. My parents said that the politicians were too incompetent to make decisions. I mentioned that it was so difficult already for my class to find common solutions and that it is therefore even harder for politicians who do not speak a common language to make difficult and important decisions.” Another student remarked that they are allowed to vote at the age of 16 and that they should therefore discuss politics.

#### M 7: Focus group with the teachers

At the end of the school year the competences of the students were assessed with a mean of 1.7. This can be interpreted as a positive effect of the game simulation (see also M 1). The results of the evaluation were discussed and the teachers agreed to the findings. All teachers underlined that the success of the simulation game depends on the successful embedding of the method into the pedagogical concept. One teacher said: “The simulation game is [...] one brick of many bricks in education. It is the sum of methods. It is a brick – an important one.”

### **Conclusion**

Regarding the first research question it must be stressed that this evaluation refers to the simulation games played in the research project. Statements about the effect of the simulation game cannot be understood as a one dimensional cause-and-effect-chain. The results show that all evaluated games were successful and the participants, observers and instructors assessed them very positively. The embedding of the method into the pedagogical concept, the professional instructors and a coherent sequence consisting of introduction, identification, playing and reflection are the key factors for the positive results. It is recommended that additional creative and performative elements are implemented into the game to make it even more performative. It was also recommended that teachers who want to play the game either have to attend a specific training program or should be supported by professional instructors who play with the students (as was the case in this project).

The answer to the second research question can also be found in the context of performative pedagogy: The success and effects of the simulation game depends on the group dynamic and individual processes and conditions. The results of the research project show that there are real effects not only during but also after the game on the group and the individuals.

As an answer for the third question, it can be stated that all participants stated that competences are applied in the simulation game and can be fostered with this method.

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