The sociocratic consent

This overview will provide answers to the question "What is a sociocratic consent?" and "What are the benefits of using sociocracy?". This information has been complied by experienced sociocrats and is intended to show you that all of us can learn how to go about reaching a sociocratic consent.

Reaching decisions by consent can make a school more agile and easy-going because educators can change everything at any moment. Instead of having to agree on a specific opinion, ask yourselves: Are we ready to accept this decision in order to reach a shared goal? Is this decision good enough for everyone and is it safe enough to test it here? Am I comfortable with the decision until we re-evaluate it?

<u>Benefits of the consent</u>
At first glance, the consent is a method for decision-making, however its relevance goes beyond being just a tool: Consent is both an attitude and an outcome. This means that it is not the majority that makes decisions, but instead the best argument is decisive. It is important to note that this decision only applies as long as there is no better argument.

Once a new concern or solution arises, there is the possibility to include a new proposal in the previous decision. The advantage is that further decisions will only improve the previous decision – or at least not worsen it, in case that there are good reasons for not making a new decision (Bollinger 2017).

It is important to keep in mind that everyone who will be affected by the decision can voice their objection. This is especially relevant whenever objections arise after the decision has been consented. In other words, there is no longer a consent. In this case, the reason for objecting has to be made transparent. If the objection is justified, the decision needs to changed. Therefore, the consent is a method for improving a preciously made decision instead of veto that might prevent further improvement which might in turn lead to inequality. We appreciate all objections because they are a present from individuals to society (ibid.).

There are, however, some things that can only be found out by testing and trying something new. These concerns do not necessarily equate to objections. This means that it is necessary to first test new things out in order to confirm or dismiss any concerns. In doing so, we avoid being motivated by fear, thus possibly missing the opportunity to try something new. These concerns are recorded and are an important part for evaluating the decision after some time: Did they prove true or were they disproved?

From our experience at Laborschule Bielefeld, we had the impression that as a school we wanted to make the "perfect" decision that would hold true forever. However, this proved to be exhausting for everyone and, in the worst case, could prevent any decision from being reached. By writing this overview we hope to encourage schools to come to decisions that are good enough for now and that allow you to take the next step: Wouldn't you agree that it is more effective to make a decision in the best way possible under the present circumstances and then improve it over time than continuing to discuss without ever reaching a decision?

From our perspective, one of the strengths of the consent is that the participants become aware of their responsibility, start asking questions and voice their objections. Everyone's voice counts and the sociocratic circle allows even the quieter ones to speak up. By enabling everyone to participate in this circle, decisions become more sustainable.
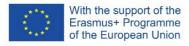
As you can see, these measures encourage an attitude that allows decisions to be reached quicker and fairer. All of the different steps and their chronological sequence of the consent method play a crucial part in making it an efficient decision-making process. There even are some tricks and short-cuts once all participants have become familiar with the method. This looks promising, doesn't it?

References

Bollinger, Arne (2017). Konsens und Konsent. https://s3lf.org/erklaerungen/konsens-und-konsent/