**The balloon debate- step by step guide**

1. Split the class into groups of two to four.
2. Allocate each group with a subject matter relating to their current curriculum module. For example; as my learners were studying environmental technologies used in the construction industry, each group represented a source of energy such as coal, solar, biomass etc.
3. Give the class thirty/forty minutes to compile as many positive and/or useful facts about their allocated subject and suggest that they may wish to use the time to research some negative points about the subjects being represented by their peers.
4. Arrange all of the tables/chairs in the classroom into a circle and invite all of the learners, in their groups, to sit on the table facing inwards.
5. Explain to the group that they are sitting in a hot air balloon but it will only be light enough to take off when there is just one group left. Each group will have 2 minutes (or whatever suits your area/lesson) to promote their subject and put forward their argument on why they should remain in the balloon.
6. After the first round of debate the learners can put forward any counter arguments/negative aspects of their peer’s subject, at which point each team votes for the team they think should leave the balloon.
7. Repeat this process until you only have one team left in the balloon. The teams voted out of the balloon still get to vote at the end of each round to keep them involved and collectively they have the deciding vote in the event of a tie.
8. At the end of the debate when only one team remain you can have a discussion with the group regarding their thoughts on the voting system; did they think it was fair? why was it fair?

The session can provide a good opportunity to discuss democracy and enables the students to participate in the democratic process without it being the sole focus of the session.