

#MBOSTem :
bridging the gap between politicians and VET students
Netherlands

<https://werkplaatsburgerschap.nl/mb>

DESCRIPTION

#MBOSTem is a year-long project, launched in 2020, aimed at **engaging VET students in local, regional, national, and European election**. A team of four to six students, two teachers and two researchers collaborated in **pedagogical partnerships**. Students typically worked one day per week, teachers half a day per week, and one researcher contributed one day per week.

Students initiated a **campaign to engage politicians**, asking them to introduce themselves and explain their plans for vocational students. All political parties responded, and the students selected and invited politicians for a **podcast**. They also created a **questionnaire** to **identify the priorities of their peers** and **developed lessons** for them incorporating the videos and podcasts.

The students organised an **election festival** to meet politicians and participate in activities related to political topics. In the first year, the festival was held online due to COVID-19, with low student participation but over half a million video views. In the second year, students proactively reached out to teachers and students to inform about the project, resulting in **800 students participating in the festival**. In the third year, the same number of students took part.

REFLECTIONS

- Mobilising students was challenging as they were not used to work in this kind of **pedagogical partnerships**. They were also given **leadership roles**, which met resistance from some teachers. However, teachers and researchers supported the students and were involved in the organisation of activities. As a result, both involved students and teachers **gained confidence** in this collaborative approach.
- To implement the activity, pedagogical partnerships were created between students and teachers, **positioning students as change agents** in improving the curriculum and fostering a stronger sense of belonging. These partnerships re-position students' role and create an **equity-based relationship with teachers and staff members**. Building such partnerships **takes time** as all parts must **adapt to their new roles**. It is crucial to dedicate time to this process and find a balance. Initially, for example, students were less vocal than teachers, but by the end of first year, they increasingly began taking more initiative.
- The project provided valuable experiences in building **inclusive curricula** and promoting **informal ways for participation**. A challenge was **ensuring diversity in student recruitment**, focusing on **inclusivity** rather than engaging only vocal or extroverted students.