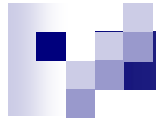




Talking our heads off – discussing dicussions

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Why discussing discussions?

What is discussion in theory?

What is discussion in practice?

How can discussions be improved?



Why discussing
discussions?



1. Curricular reasons - Germany

DgfG 2007, *Educational Standards in Geography for the Intermediate School Certificate*:

„K 2 Ability to speak about geographically / geoscientifically relevant facts, to discuss them and develop a well-founded opinion

Students can:

- S 5 identify the logical, argumentative and geographical quality of their own and other people's statements in the context of geographical issues, and react appropriately,
- S 6 weigh geographical statements and evaluations based on selected examples and develop their own, well-founded opinion in a discussion and/or develop an appropriate compromise (e. g., role-playing, scenarios).“



1. Curricular reasons - UK

Skills across the National Curriculum:

„Skills in speaking and listening include the ability to speak effectively for different audiences; to listen, understand and respond appropriately to others; and to participate effectively in group discussion.“

„Pupils should be taught to listen to others, and to respond and build on their ideas and views constructively.“



2. Scientific reasons: lack of German research

- master thesis on discussion in the Geography classroom (Serwene 2009)
- earliest research from 1960s (Rössner 1967)
- PhD theses in the GDR (Behling/ Schwarz 1977, Berhold 1979, Rausch 1987)
- recent research (Spiegel 2006, Vogt 2002)



2. Scientific reasons: findings on discussion in the classroom

benefits of discussions (Hess 2005):

1. democratise the classroom
2. develop skills of critical thought
3. develop skills of argumentation
4. offer different perspectives on the same questions
5. help pupils to better learn content knowledge
6. improve skills to dialogue across difference
7. develop tolerance and an understanding of why tolerance is necessary
8. positively influence other forms of political engagement
9. positively influence pupils' civic behaviour



2. Scientific reasons: findings on discussion in the classroom

- generally poor argumentation skills (Driver / Newton / Osborne 2000)
- generally positive attitudes about classroom discussion among pupils (Hess / Posselt 2002)
- teachers rarely offer opportunities for discussion (Clark / Sampson 2008)
- teachers are inexperienced at managing and defining discussions (Dillon 1994, Larson / Parker 1996, Geddis 1991)



What is discussion
in theory?



Defining conditions (Larson / Parker 1996)

1. several points of view on a subject
2. discussants are responsive
3. developing of knowledge



Discussion (Polzius 1992)

1. Preparation

2. Discussion

3. Evaluation

4. Continuation



Preparation stage

a) with regards to content

b) with regards to organisation

c) with regards to metacognition



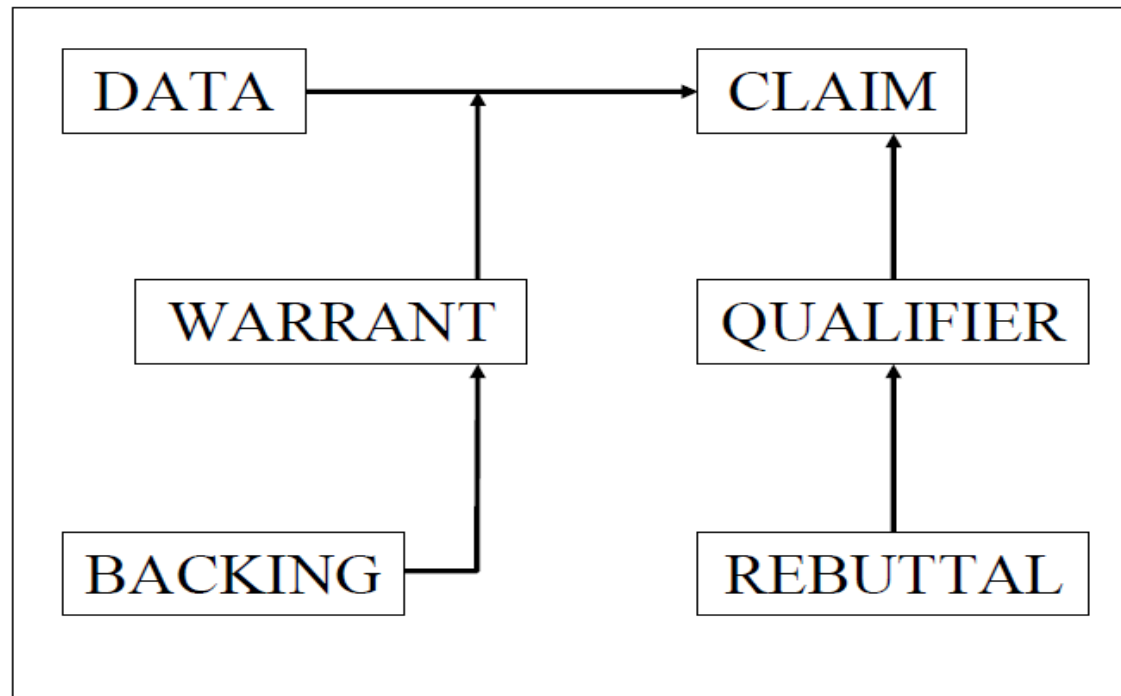
Discussion stage

a) opening

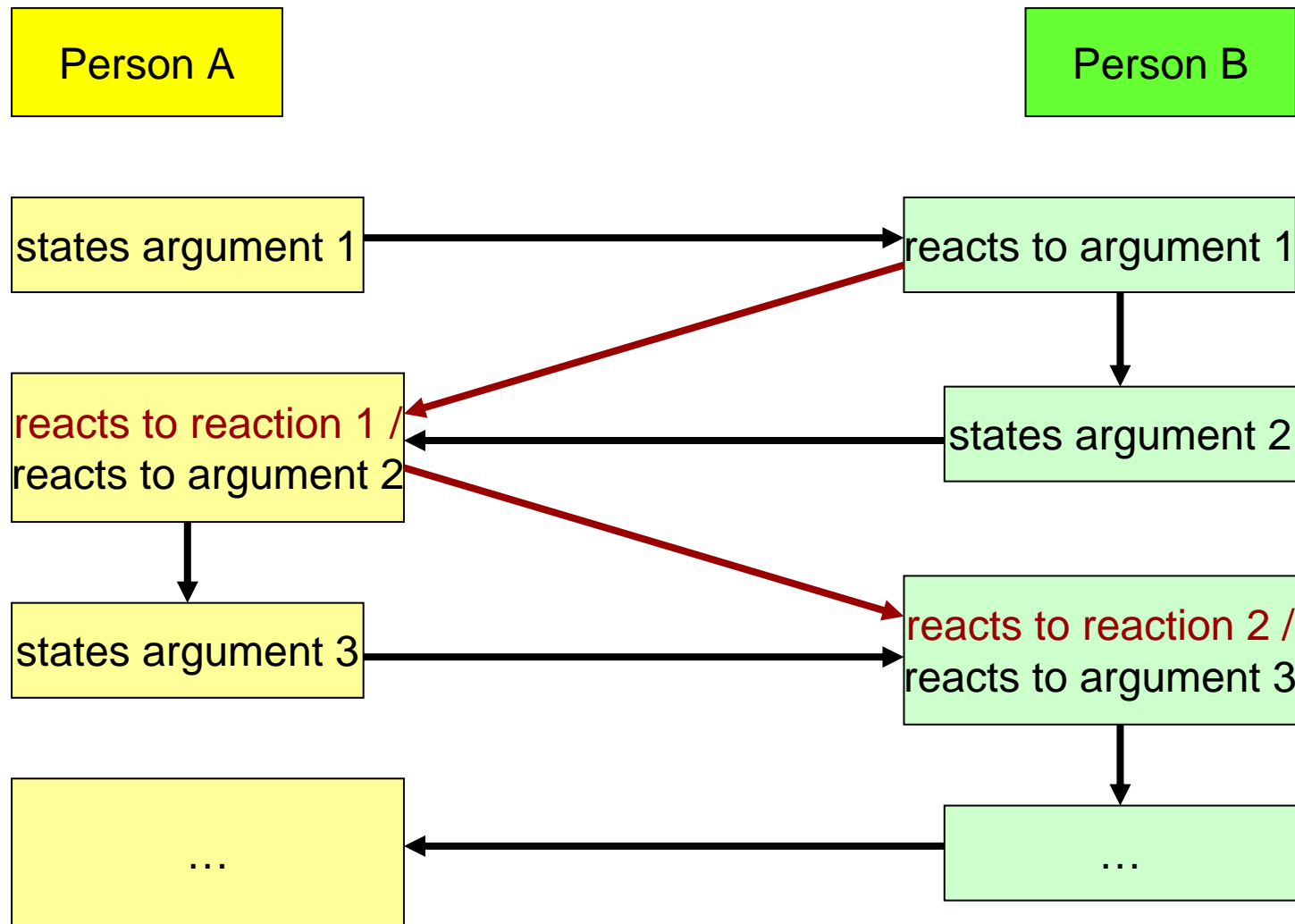
b) actual discussion:

1. presentation
2. negotiation
3. result

Toulmin Model of Argument (1969)



Process of discussion (Wohlrapp 2008)





Discussion stage

successful process, if discussants:

- develop new knowledge
- argue issue-related
- behave cooperatively



Evaluation stage

a) with regards to content

b) with regards to metacommunication

c) with regards to methodology



Continuation stage

- in-depth discussion
- discussion from own point of view
- further work on discussed issue



What is discussion in
practice?



Empirical survey

- case study of nine discussions
- qualitative text and video analysis of transcripts and videotapes
- pupils of 6th-12th grade / 11-18 years old



General findings

- mostly pro-contra discussions / convergent sequences
- mostly panel discussions
- only two discussions from own perspective



Findings from preparation stage

- generally few information provided by teachers
- mostly organisational instructions
- only few stated discussion rules
- hardly any help through scaffolding and instruction

Findings from discussion stage

- not all moderators are able to promote discussion
- tendency of pupils to argue with own experience
- some pupils have problems with the structure of arguments
- critique on argumentation can be found in most discussions
- most discussants behave cooperatively

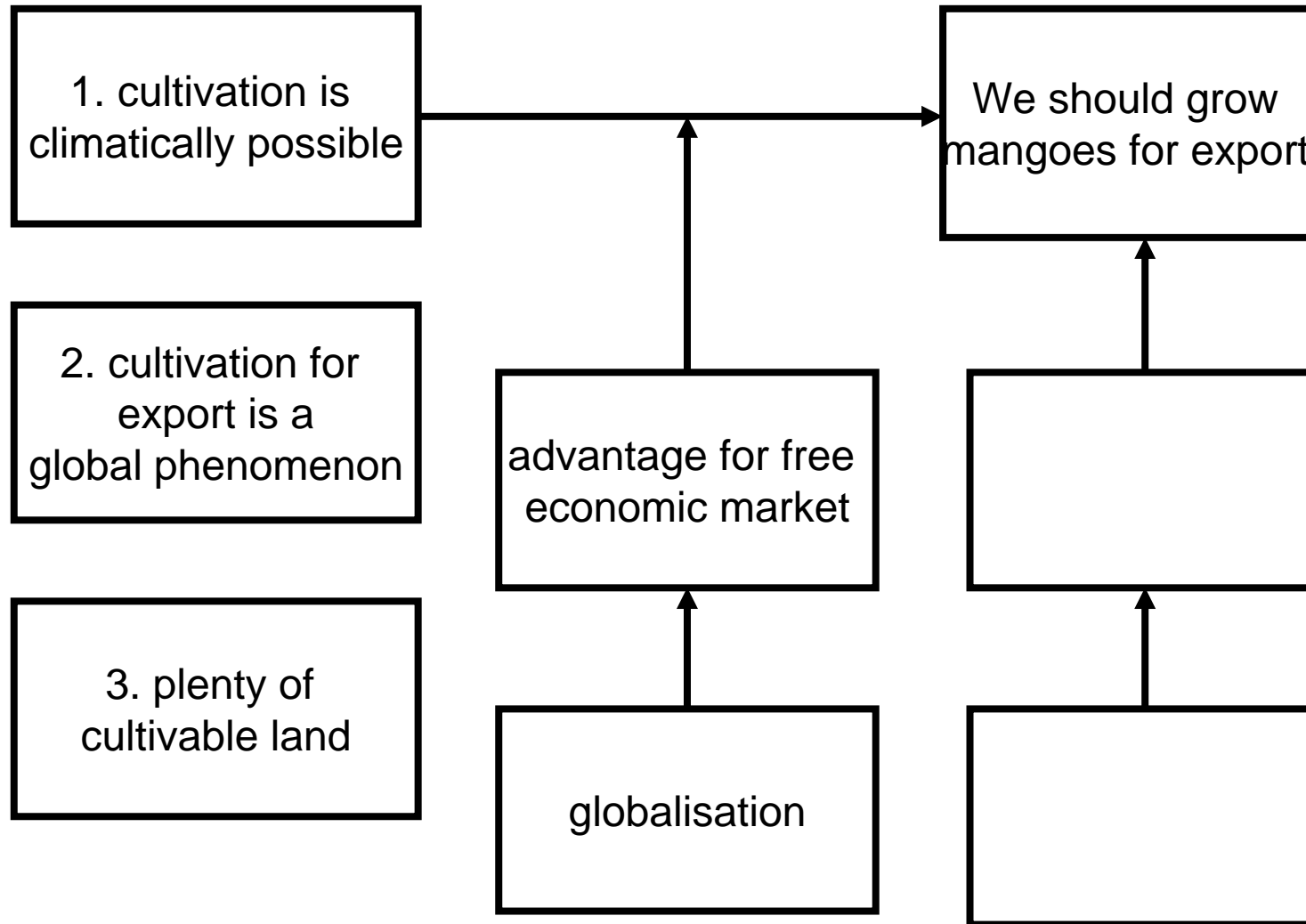


Moderator 1: Okay I have got a question for Mr. Knutsen.

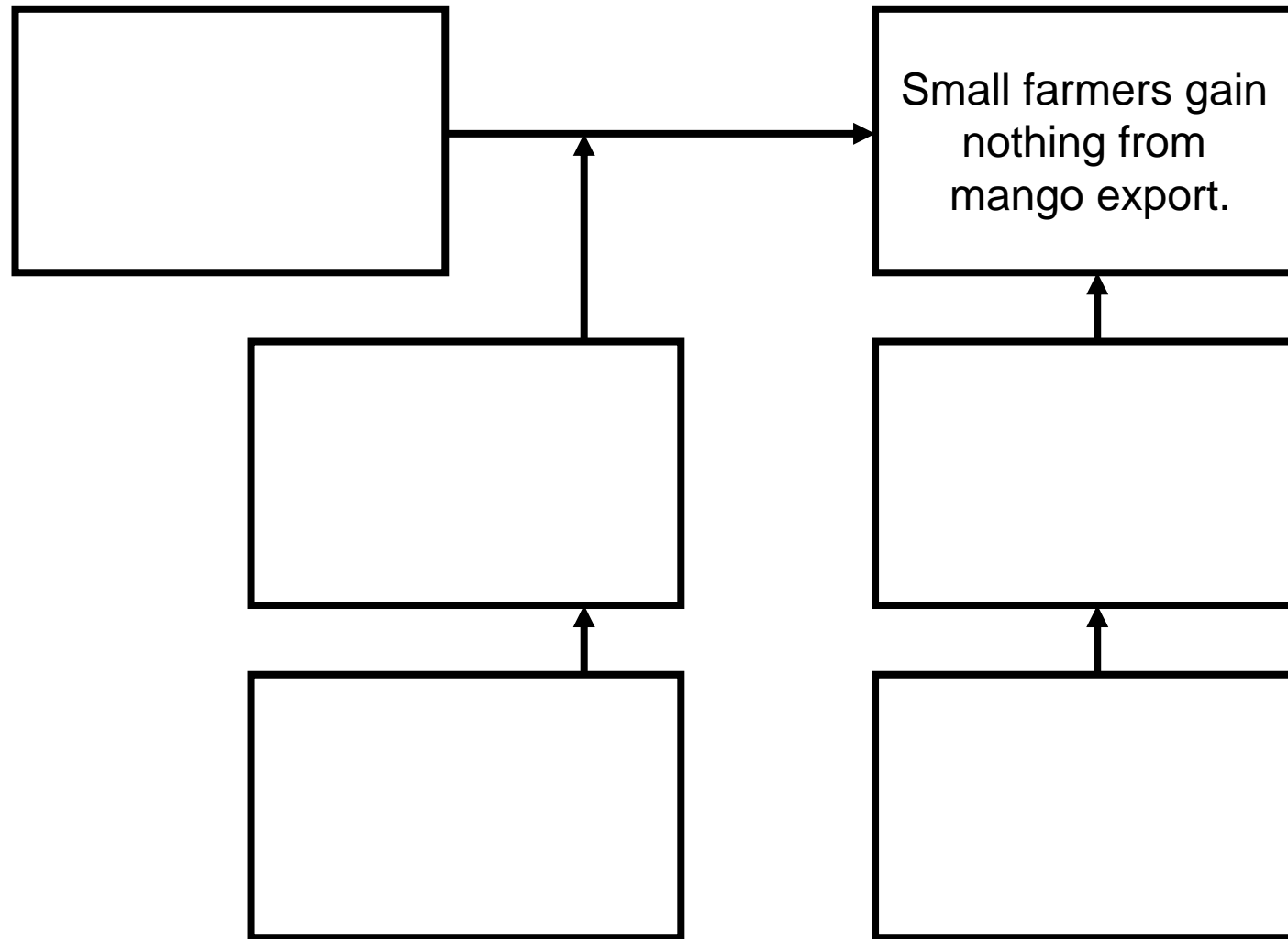


Moderator: What does the government think about it?

Argumentation of politician



Argumentation of farmer

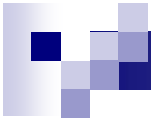


Findings from evaluation stage

- four discussions without any evaluation or only short teacher remark
- only two attempts to evaluate all dimensions
- metacommunicative evaluation mostly superficial



Pupil: I liked Nicole, Lisa and Victoria best. They developed most arguments and



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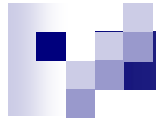


Findings from continuation stage

- own view mostly asked via short voting
- continuation of discussion only in two discussions
- continuation even more intense than actual discussion



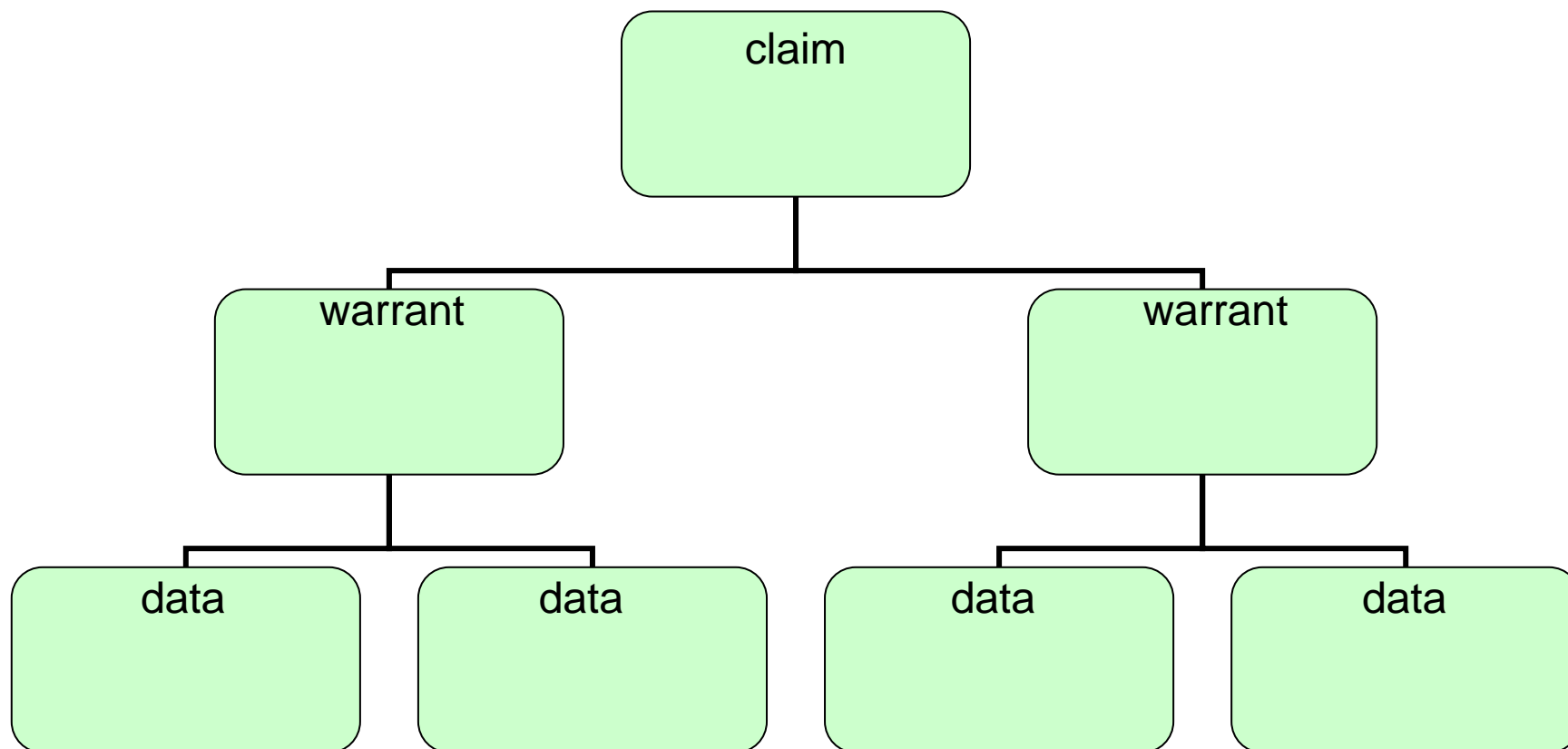
How can discussions
be improved?

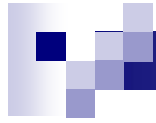


Preparation stage

- Time
- Scaffolding
- Detailed information

Argumentation tree (Uhlenwinkel 2005)





Planning sheet (Taylor 2004)

Your point	Counter-argument	Possible response?

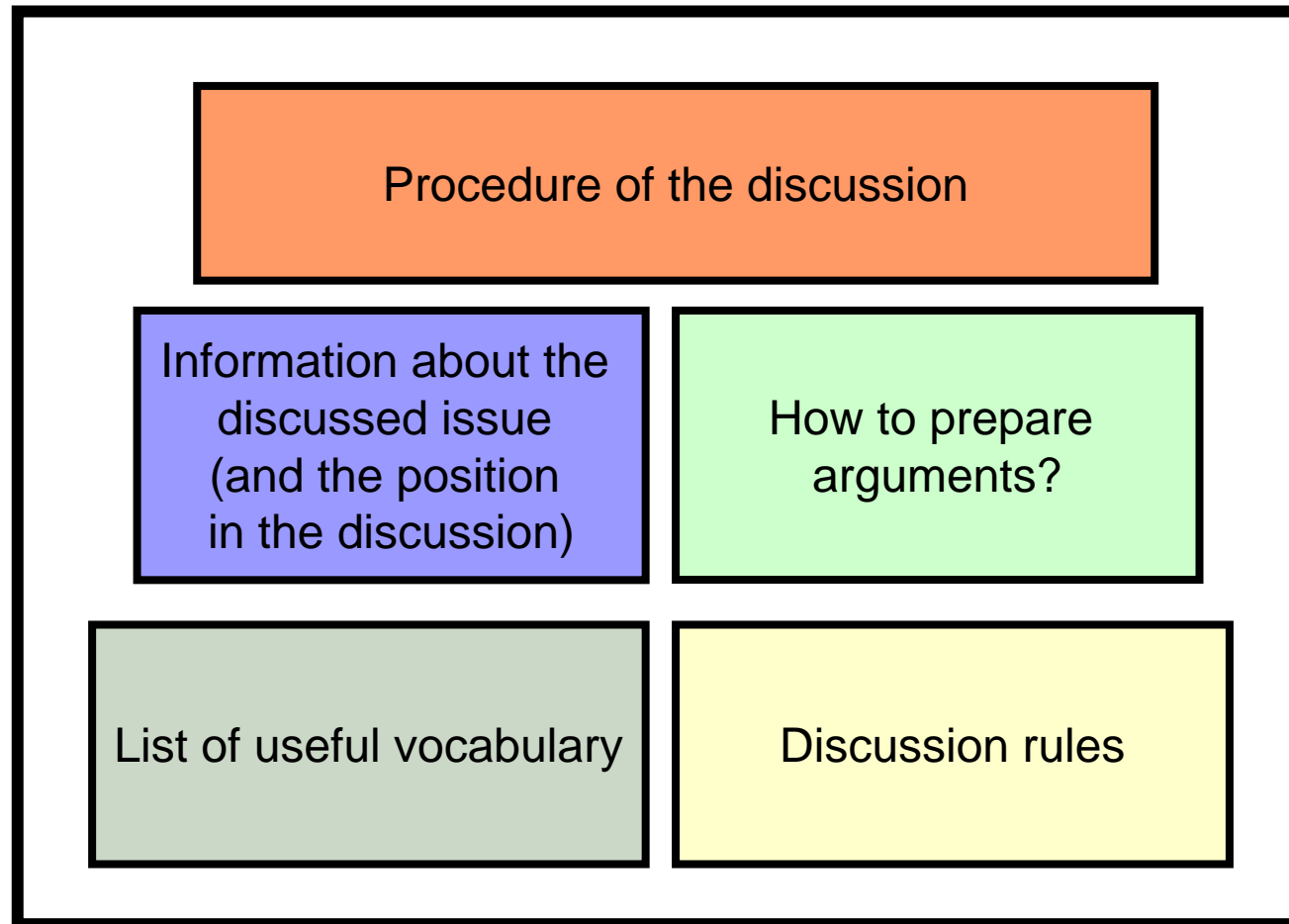


List of useful vocabulary (Serwene 2009)

<p>Giving reason by reason of since as a result of</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Argument:</p>	<p>Stating consequences consequently thus for</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Argument:</p>	<p>Structuring conjuncts first of all as an example finally</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Argument:</p>
<p>Connecting conjuncts furthermore also not only... but also</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Argument:</p>	<p>Concessive conjuncts although despite</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Argument</p>	<p>Contrasting conjuncts but whereas nevertheless</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Argument:</p>



Briefing sheet





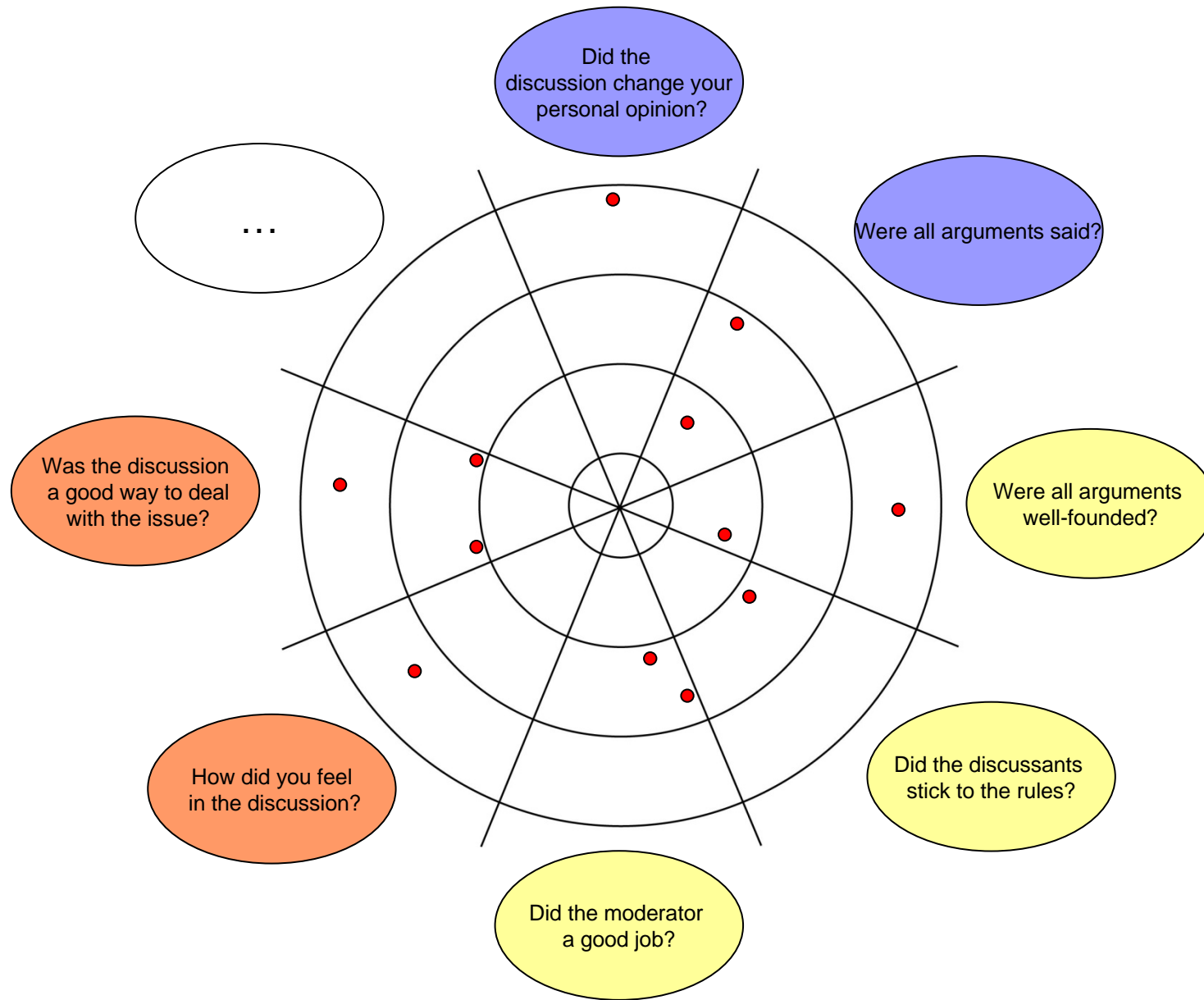
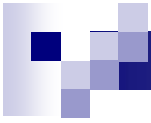
Discussion stage

- Knowledge
- Practice
- Help of moderator



Evaluation stage

- Time
- Evaluation questions and criteria
- Feedback methods





Thank you for your attention –
and now it's time for discussion!





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