

Lesson 1

Who is in charge?

What is the best way to govern a country?

Learning objective	The students learn about different forms of government, e.g. democracy and dictatorship.
Student tasks	The students reflect upon the fairness of the system of government in place in an imaginary society.
Resources	Copies of student handout 9.1 for each student, paper and pens.
Method	Story, pair work, whole class discussion, formal debate.

Conceptual learning

Forms of government can be classified in different ways, for example, in terms of who holds power, how power is conferred on people, where sovereignty lies and how rule is enforced. In practice, the principal types are: democracy, monarchy, theocracy and tyranny or dictatorship. These should be thought of as “ideal types”, because in reality they can co-exist in the same country – for example, a parliamentary democracy may contain within it elements of dictatorship or may co-exist with a ruling royal family.

The lesson

The teacher begins the lesson by reading the story, “The Kingdom of Sikkal” (student handout 9.1). The students should each have their own copy of the story, so they can follow it whilst the teacher is reading.

The teacher should stop reading part way through the story and ask:

- What do you think of life in Sikkal from what you have heard so far?

At the end of the story, the teacher should ask:

- What do you think of life in Sikkal now?

The teacher divides the students into pairs and asks them to reflect upon the quality of life in Sikkal. Students are given a piece of paper on which they should write down what they think are the advantages and disadvantages of living in Sikkal.

The teacher asks the pairs to present their ideas to the class as a whole and writes up the main points for all to see.

Then the teacher asks the class as a whole to reflect on the way that Sikkal is governed:

- Do you think Sikkal is run in a fair way? Why or why not?
- If you think it could be run in a fairer way, what sort of things would you need to change for it to be fairer?

Next the teacher asks the class to imagine that they are inhabitants of Sikkal. The class is divided into two large groups for a debate: one group is asked to argue in favour of the country continuing to be run by the king; the other group is asked to argue that every inhabitant – not just the king – should have a say in the running of the country. The teacher gives the groups a few minutes to think of and write down arguments they can use in the debate. The two different groups are seated facing each other on opposite sides of the classroom and the debate begins. Students from each side take it in turns to express their views – perhaps aided by a “talking stick”, that is, a stick used as a microphone.

The teacher asks the students to give their opinions on which of the two sides had the best arguments.

The students are now ready for a brief explanation (inductive approach). The teacher writes down the names of five types of government and explains how they are different, referring to the students’ inputs where possible:

- monarchy;
- democracy;
- dictatorship;
- theocracy;
- anarchy.

The lesson ends by asking the students about the system of government in their country. For homework, the students are asked to find out more about this and to formulate a quiz – of 5-10 questions – to test the knowledge of the rest of the class in the next lesson.