

Exercise 3.4. – The balloon ride

Educational objectives	<p>The students become aware of universal values in human rights. They understand that some human rights are implicitly contained in others but, within the system of human rights, it makes a difference if specific human rights are protected or not.</p> <p>The students understand that human rights are unalienable, and that the arbitrary abolition of human rights borders on dictatorship.</p>
Note on use	This game can be used as an introduction at the beginning of a lesson sequence on human rights or as a transfer exercise at the end.
Resources	Pens and paper, preferably large sheets to be put on the wall; list of the rights to be thrown away/prioritised.

Procedure

1. The teacher manages the game. The students form groups of five to six people. Each group receives a poster and marker pens. The students draw a hot air balloon above the ocean or the local scenery. The sand ballast sacks symbolising ten human rights are stuck on to the poster (see list below).
2. Now the game begins. The students are to imagine themselves travelling with the “human rights balloon”. The balloon starts to sink and the passengers have to drop some ballast to avoid a serious accident.

The task for the students is to prioritise the human rights represented by the ballast sacks. They will use criteria such as the following. Is one right implicitly contained in another? Is one right of particular importance for democracy, or our personal needs?

3. However, the balloon keeps sinking and more ballast has to be thrown out at regular intervals. The students have to drop more ballast sacks. After four or five sacks have been thrown overboard the balloon reaches the ground safely.
4. Reflection in the plenary round. Each group presents their list to the whole class/group and explains (some of) their priorities. Then the lists can be compared. Are there many differences? There should also be a debriefing about the work in the groups. Was it difficult to agree? Was it difficult to give priority to some human rights rather than to others? Hopefully it can be agreed that all the human rights listed are important but that people might differ in their priorities if they had to choose.

In a functioning constitution, the abolition of any of these rights would cause serious damage to democracy. Human rights are natural rights and therefore unalienable. The balloon ride was therefore a simulation of a situation that we hope will never happen – the rule of a dictator.

If the students come to question the rules of the game on these grounds, then its learning objective has been fully achieved.

It is possible to extend the reflection by examining which of these rights has been included in the country’s constitution, and how these rights are protected.

Extension

When the exercise is done with younger students, the pieces of ballast – the rights – should be exchanged with items more familiar to the students, for example “free elections” could be substituted by “toys”. In the debriefing, these items could then be linked to children’s rights.

Materials

Information

The ballast in the balloon consists of the following rights:

- free elections
- freedom of property
- equality of men and women
- a clean and healthy environment
- access to healthy food and clean water
- the right of education
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- clothing and housing for all citizens
- private life without interference
- freedom of movement.