

Exercise 6.1. – Basic concepts of political thought

<p>Educational objectives</p>	<p>The students understand the values that implicitly guide political argument and debate and that some of these values support human rights, while others oppose them (teaching <i>about</i> human rights).</p> <p>The exercise trains students to be willing to study and understand values and attitudes regardless as to whether they agree with them or not (teaching <i>through</i> human rights).</p>
<p>Resources</p>	<p>A list of propositions or slogans (see materials below). Alternatively, election posters, video clips or excerpts from statements or speeches in political life could be used.</p>

Procedure

1. The students form pairs or groups of four.
2. They identify the implications of the statements. It may be necessary to provide them with questions to guide them and allow a comparison, e.g. for which groups in society a proposal may have implications and what these implications might be (the students would find answers such as the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick, the powerful and the weak, etc.).
3. If they have already been introduced to basic approaches of political thought, the students could link the proposals to the different schools of thought. They may find affinities to more than one line of thinking.
4. The students judge the statements and their underlying values in the light of human rights.

Extension

The students discuss the implications of the propositions by relating them to issues under discussion in their country.

Materials

List of propositions and slogans

1. The state should not interfere with the management of the economy. It should limit itself to enforcing the law.
2. Free medical care should be guaranteed.
3. All companies should be nationalised.
4. The head of state should be accorded full powers.
5. The state, the employers and the unions should meet to determine the rate of increase in wages.
6. The state in itself is a nuisance.
7. White civilisation is the superior civilisation.
8. Weak students should be prevented from slowing down others in their studies.
9. Nobody has the right to give other people orders.
10. Society should be organised so that the ruling order respects the natural hierarchy of things.