

Exercise 7.6. – Should we take part in politics?

Educational objectives	<p>The students form their opinions as to whether it is important to participate in government.</p> <p>Participation can take place in many ways. We define participation as taking part in the public life of your community and society. Some people think it is important to participate, while others do not. The students should understand that political decisions affect them, regardless of whether they participate in decision making or not.</p>
Resources	Role cards for the role-play.

Procedure

1. Four students role-play the conversation between some newly arrived citizens in a nation in the process of creation.
2. The students discuss, guided by the teacher if necessary, questions raised by the role-play such as the following:
 - What are the four main views expressed by the citizens about participation? Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - What will the four citizens lose by not participating? What benefits do you think individuals will gain from participating?
 - What benefits do you think the new country would gain from individuals participating?
 - What are the possible risks or losses involved if one chooses to participate?
 - Weighing benefits and risks, do you think it is worthwhile participating?
3. By discussion or lecture, the students could arrive at the following conclusion:

Government affects people's lives in lot of ways. By participating in government people can have a voice in decisions made by the government. In every society someone is going to make the decisions. If people choose not to participate, they will not have a say in those decisions. These decisions can include such things as:

 - how much people will have to pay in taxes;
 - whether the society will get involved in a war;
 - who is going to own and control the country's natural resources.

Depending on how the government is structured, decisions can be made at different levels, including national, regional and local. Some decisions, such as those about military power, are often made nationally, while others, such as those concerning transport and roads, are often made regionally. Still others, such as those about rubbish collection, are frequently made locally.

Materials

(see next page)

Role-play: four citizens arrive in a newly formed country

Assume you have just arrived in a newly formed country. You are eager to get started, to get to work building a new society. You have heard that there are all kinds of possibilities to create good government. Then you overhear the following conversation among a group of your fellow new arrivals:

Citizen 1:

“Where I came from, no one cared much about politics and government. We were always too busy with our daily lives. So here I probably won’t want to bother about politics either.”

Citizen 2:

“That’s the way it is in our country ... and I never really understood what was going on among the leaders. They made it seem so complicated and made it very easy for us not to bother trying to understand.”

Citizen 3:

“Well, it was different in our country. We tried but people who had power wouldn’t let us get involved and we were threatened if we did try. So finally we gave up trying to participate.”

Citizen 4:

“In my country we had elections and our leaders promised us good government. But it never turned out that way. The leaders used government to get rich. All leaders are corrupt.”