

Introduction and Methodological Background

Democracy

COURSE FOR EXPERTS

GE4Youth /Global Education for Youth Workers



Democracy

Area introduction

Introduction to Democracy

When we talk about democracy when it comes to global education, we are meaning the right for all citizens of any country in the world to have access to education. This is something that is seen as a basic human right, to be seen in the same light as access to food, shelter – or democracy. It is something that is enshrined in any country's process, the ability for people, in particular, young people, to be able to gain a solid education in order for them to be able to make the most of their lives.

'Democracy is the control of a group or organisation by the majority of its members'.

Access to education is something that in a democratic society needs to be guaranteed for all citizens, regardless of their financial situation, class or background. What the person's political beliefs or where they live are unimportant. Education is a given, not a goal or something to 'earn'. Without this the idea of equality fails because only the educated get to form policy and dictate the direction any one society will take.

Democracy here also relates to the will of the people. It expresses and incorporates their desire to learn about the world and better themselves. It gives them a chance to escape or climb out of an undesirable situation. It's a chance to change the life they were born into, and in turn change the lives of any family or children they happen to have in the future. Without education, the ability to mould one's life for the better becomes a labourious chore.

How democratic choice impacts on our lives

The ability to choose our own life paths is paramount to a healthy and happy life. Being stuck in unfavourable situations with no way out can leave us feeling despondent and angry. As well as this, it negatively affects our health and relationships.

Because global education 'incorporates learning about the cultures, geographies, histories, and current issues of all the world's regions,' by being able to access a solid education from a young age, means that you have more to offer the world, and the world has more to offer you. Better decisions and choices can be made as you can see and take into account other people's feelings, personalities and cultural proclivities.





It allows to youth to engage meaningfully with their peers and to come together in a collaborative spirit to affect and guide their lives and their communities.

As GE aims to help students to understand the world in which they live – particularly through social sciences, cultural understanding, human development, and humanities, these disciplines can expand the minds of youngsters and help them make better choices and follow better paths as the knowledge and experience to them will be varied and vast.

New skills to improve the democratic process

Global Education aims to instil traits and skills like reasoning and invention. These give youngsters and people in general the tools to better able to make informed decisions. These decisions come from a place of wisdom and forethought and experience and are likely to be more productive and more effective than those decided upon where basic education is lacking. Democracy is helped by the ability to make informed choices. It is through this that we can strive to make a healthier and happier community. Places where everyone is on a more equal footing because everyone will have gone through some sort of basic education and will inherit similar possibilities, depending on effort applied to their learning.

Good Governance

Governance is the process and action of governing or managing an organisation, state or process. For Global Education to become a reality and not just a pipe dream, it needs to be run well and have coherent strategies and a firm direction. It is a lofty goal to try and include all the world's youth in education, and due to this good direction and governance needs to be in place, along with strong leadership and objectives.

It's no easy task educating the world's children – or even guaranteeing them a space in the world of education. Ecosystems must be setup, and a good name that's recognised beyond individual country borders must be established. There needs to be agreement between different states and country about the importance of education and the overall form it will take. Many countries don't place high stock in education and for this to be successful and completely inclusive attitudes and opinion will have to change for the long term.

For Global Education, governance needs to filter down into respective jurisdictions so that it becomes automatic and self-managing in every country. It is not just about having one central authority, but many complementary bodies who all have the same objective in mind: to educate the world's children so that all have a relatively equal chance to develop and succeed.



Methodology background

These activities were selected for their interest and educational qualities. They will help the youth workers to help show the topic of democracy in a different light for the young people they mentor and highlight just how important it is in regard to global education.

There are a total of five activities and their purpose is to inspire real-world knowledge and awareness. They are meant to encourage students into lateral thinking and to be able to look at the processes on which the world operates and see them from a different angle – an angle that gives them a sense of increased power and autonomy. With a deeper and more insightful knowledge of how things are run, students will have a better understanding of the complexity of the workings of democracy and governance, but also more of an understanding of how to improve and shape them for the better.

A brief overview of the exercises is described below:

1. *Fair VS unfair voting*

Method: *This activity is done in the classroom using physical objects*

This activity aims to educate the young people about the process of voting and how voting procedures can often be unfair.

They will need to think about the conditions under which a vote will take place. What needs to be ensured to guarantee a fair vote? What type of structure must the process follow to ensure there is no misrepresentation of certain demographics or groups of people?

With this activity, they will learn and discuss the many ways to organise and run a fair election. The students will also learn how elections can be rigged or tampered with (this can happen anywhere, not just far-flung places or developing countries) so as not to give everyone an equal voice and say in how things are run.

They are given several situations where a vote is taking place. The students will need to identify which ones are fair and which ones unfair. After this, they will then develop their own real-world vote, where they will outline the parameters by which the voting process should take place, and what safeguards will need to be implemented to ensure that the vote is fair to all involved.

The acquired skills and values that young people will develop from these exercises are as follows,





Skills *Teamwork and Co-operation, Decision making, Critical thinking*

Values *Social responsibility and solidarity*

2. Design a Holiday

Method: *This activity can be done using a digital device or physical materials*

This is a creative exercise where youth workers must form groups and design a public holiday for their town or city. It will demand that they come to a joint agreement about what is important to the place they live. What's more, they will need to come a conclusion on what their town is famous for – or what makes it special!

This is an exercise in being able to compromise with those around you while being on a 'committee'. Everyone's voice must be taken into account, otherwise students will find that bad blood can sour a process and leave a bad taste in everyone's mouth, not to mention damage the process and harm any decisions that are trying to be made.

The holiday being designed will be a celebration of the village, town, or city where the students live, and needs to somehow include all the inhabitants of that place. It will illustrate what is good about the place and why the people there will enjoy it and why they should celebrate it. The goal is to ensure that everyone looks forward to that day every year – like St. Patrick's Day in Ireland and across the world!

The acquired skills and values that young people will develop from these exercises are as follows,

Skills *Teamwork and Co-operation, decision making,*

Values *Social responsibility and solidarity & Open-mindedness and proactivity*

3. Start a Petition!

Method: *This activity can be done with digital devices or physical materials*

Bad decisions are often made by individual governments. This is not limited to any geographical area and the reasons can vary and are numerous. Sometimes, it's just an unfortunate result of actively trying to do good for their citizens, but for some reason has backfired because of lack of forethought. Other times, it can be due to negligence or corruption on the part of officials who





are trying to line their own pockets or strike deals which don't take their constituents best interests into consideration.

This activity will have the students identify a bad policy or law in their own country. They will decide why it is bad and why they should start a petition to get it revoked. They will agree on very basic elements, such as,

What makes this policy so destructive or limiting to the population?

What are the reasons behind the policy and why do they think it was implemented (this stimulates outside of the box thinking) in the first place.

What sort of safeguards should be implemented in regard to policymaking and policymakers, if any?

The students will agree on how best to go about creating the petition (online, out on the streets, by mail, email etc), and how to disseminate it to as many people as possible.

The acquired skills and values that young people will develop from these exercises are as follows,

Skills *Teamwork and Co-operation, Decision making, Critical thinking*

Values *Social responsibility and solidarity & Open-mindedness and proactivity*

4. Develop a Bill of Rights

Method: *This activity can be done using a digital device or physical materials*

Every country needs a Bill of Rights to guarantee certain rights for their citizens; for example, the right to free speech or to protest. This ensures a certain level of freedom and helps to keep citizens happy because they see that their leaders care about them.

The students will form a government committee and discuss between them what they consider important in life. Then they will write down the main points, or 'rights', that their citizens will have. They will need to bear in mind that they must give enough for the citizens to be happy that their government isn't trying to take advantage or manipulate them, and to stop them from rioting, but to be careful with their selections as some may be difficult to guarantee, while others may be legally, socially, or morally difficult to implement.



Students can even suggest different amendments, such as the above, or sub-rights that the population could be entitled to. These can range from access to medical treatment to a right to enough food to stop from starving to a roof over your head.

The acquired skills and values that young people will develop from these exercises are as follows,

Skills *Teamwork and Co-operation, Decision making, Critical thinking*

Values *Social responsibility and solidarity*

5. *Sharing the love*

Method: *This activity can be done using a digital device or physical materials such as pens and markers*

When it comes to good governance, part of how governments and other institutions go about making the lives of their constituents or employees better is how they use the money that is available to them. For instance, do they use it to fund worthwhile areas of the community, such as health or social housing, or do they squander it on things that don't matter and that do nothing to enrich the lives of their people?

Students will form groups or go solo for this exercise. They will each be given a budget for governance which will be set by the teacher. They will be given a number of areas which the budget will need to cover. The students will converse together if they are in groups and decide what percentage of the total budget should be allocated to each area. They will draw a pie chart to illustrate their findings and talk about why they chose to divide it like they did and why it's so important for every sector in society to be given a certain amount.

The acquired skills and values that young people will develop from these exercises are as follows,

Skills *Decision making, Critical thinking*

Values *Social responsibility and solidarity*





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