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| Title | Equality and Democracy | | |
| Learning unit number | 7 | Duration | 1 hour |
| General objective | Define, describe and grasp the concepts of equality and democracy and how they are correlated. | | |
| Specific objectives | <p>Learners will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the basic principles of democracy and equality 2. Gain a short history of today's democracies and how equality is directly linked to discrimination. 3. Gain a critical perspective of the concepts of equality and democracy. | | |
| <p>Learning outcomes (<i>at least 2 of each</i>): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy (see Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs- Annex)</p> | <p>Knowledge:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learners can define Equality and Democracy 2. Learners can define 'Discrimination' 3. Learners can define 'protected characteristics' 4. Learners can illustrate several different of democracies <p>Skills:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learners illustrate practical examples of democracy 2. Learners illustrate practical examples of equality 3. Learners can demonstrate how democratic collective decision making is done <p>Responsibility and Autonomy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learners demonstrate the ability to interact equally with individuals from different cultural groups | | |

2. Learners demonstrate the ability to make collective decisions in a democratic way

Learning unit summary (abstract – half a page)

The history of humanity has shown that democratic ideals of inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency can only be achieved when laws, policies, measures, and practices that address inequalities are in place. Democratic values support the belief that an orderly society can exist in which freedom is preserved. But order and freedom must be balanced.

Collective decision making is considered democratic when it is experienced as self-determination. However, when citizens feel alienated from the general will, or from the process by which the general will is created, voting is merely a mechanism for decision making, a mechanism that can easily turn oppressive and undemocratic.

A fundamental value of democracy, as mentioned earlier, is the *political, legal, and moral* equality of every citizen, which means there can be no second-class citizens in a democracy. In other words, the principle of political equality is that no one is born with the right to rule others; and no one is born with the obligation to political obedience. On account of this elemental political equality, the only way that legitimate political authority can be established is through the consent of the governed.

List of resources, tools and methods

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Assessment Method Final Quiz

This will be developed in the IO3- Youth Workers Pedagogical Handbook



EQUALITY

DEMOCRACY

The subjects of **equality** and **democracy** are fundamental themes in the modern political and social landscapes. To understand equality and democracy however, we must first understand inequality and its complexities. Inequalities based on age, disability, sex, race, ethnicity, class, religion continue to be increasingly prevalent problems globally both within and among countries. Inequality damages individuals' sense of fulfillment and self-worth and has been proven to result in a rise in sickness and crime, consequently threatening long term social development and economic growth. Prejudice, stereotypes and abuse of power are widely accepted as recurring patterns in human societies, so in the struggle to create fairer societies, justice systems have developed ways to protect individuals and groups. Equality, therefore, has an inseparable link with justice as well as education.

Democracy, being a system of government which aspires to fulfil the value of collective self-determination and responsibility, has an indisputable connection to both collective and individual equality. Although vague in its definition, democracy places the voice and needs of the individual at the forefront of its infrastructure through a variety of means such as voting, right to life, freedom of assembly, membership and minority rights. However, what is meant by ‘equality?’ and ‘is democracy the best and fairest form of government?’ are questions which political systems, philosophers and activists have been challenged with for centuries.

Equality

Defining Equality

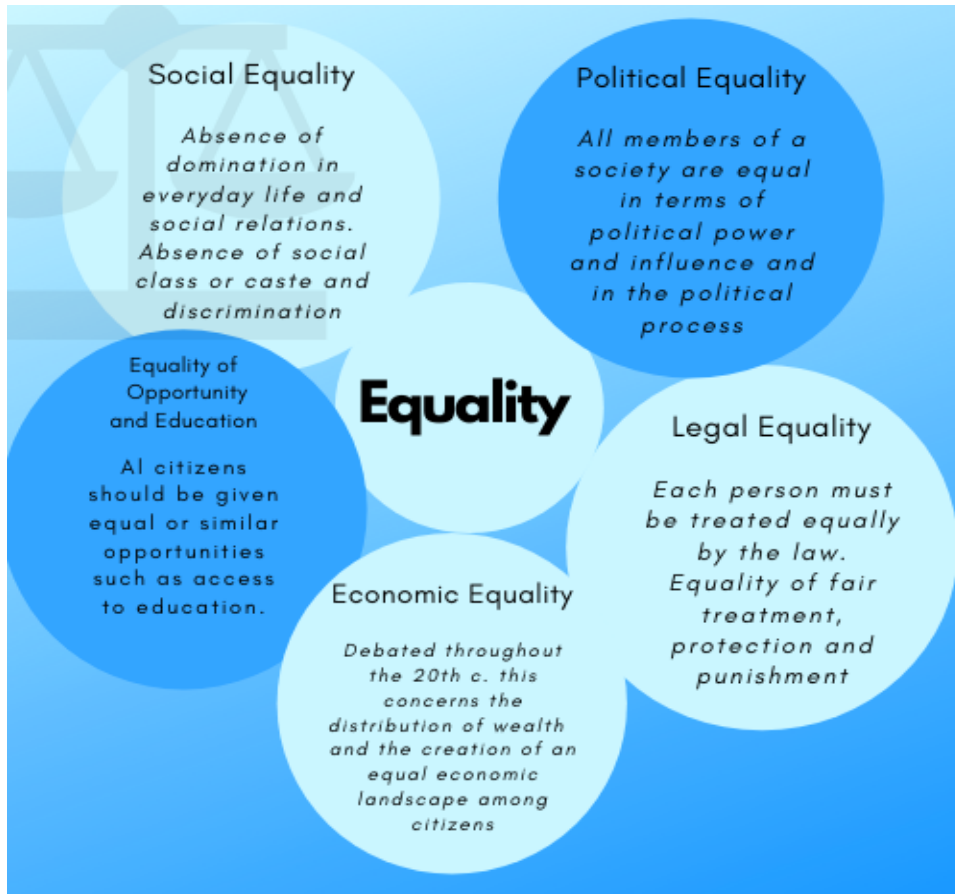
In a general sense, the definition of equality is the assurance that at the fundamental level all human beings are of equal importance and worth and should consequently receive equal treatment, rights and opportunities. Equality permits that no individual should have an inferior quality of life or fewer opportunities due to the way they were born, where they were born, their background, their beliefs or their life choices. Equality therefore attempts to tackle the evident historical discrimination of certain groups of people with protected characteristics such as disability, race, sex and gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious beliefs, class and age.

Because equality is about you! It is therefore also about everyone else.

This fundamental emphasis which is placed on the individual, and their freedoms and treatment therefore additionally places **diversity** at center stage because each individual is different. The protection and encouragement of **diversity** lies in its recognition and protection, and although all individuals and collective groups differ, their human rights and freedoms are based on shared

collective principles of acceptance and respect. Consequently, 'because equality is about you, it is therefore also about everyone else'.

There are several 'branches' which the term 'equality' may be separated in:



A Short History of Equality

Equality emphasizes that all human beings are of equal value at a fundamental level and so should receive equal respect and concern. Although



this notion is generally accepted and applied today, especially in international and European law, the concept of equality was revolutionary both in political practice and philosophical thinking when it first emerged. If we consider that most

countries in antiquity were **monarchies** (governed by royals) or had some form of birth associated hierarchy, we can appreciate why it was widely believed that certain people should receive more respect or voice than others. Although many societies still have monarchs (United Kingdom for example) or some form of birth hierarchies in government, most European countries apply equality in political practice and their judiciary systems. They are therefore considered **egalitarian** societies; societies that implement the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. These various equalities and rights, were accomplished through collective struggle and movements which called for various changes in governance through history as well as through the development of philosophy and moral thought of equality fairness and justice.

For example, the 'Age of Revolution' spanning from the 18th to 19th centuries including the French, American and Haitian Revolution as well as the Latin American Wars of Independence, was a time where most elements of absolutist monarchies (monarchies which hold supreme autocratic authority) were absolved and replaced by written constitutions



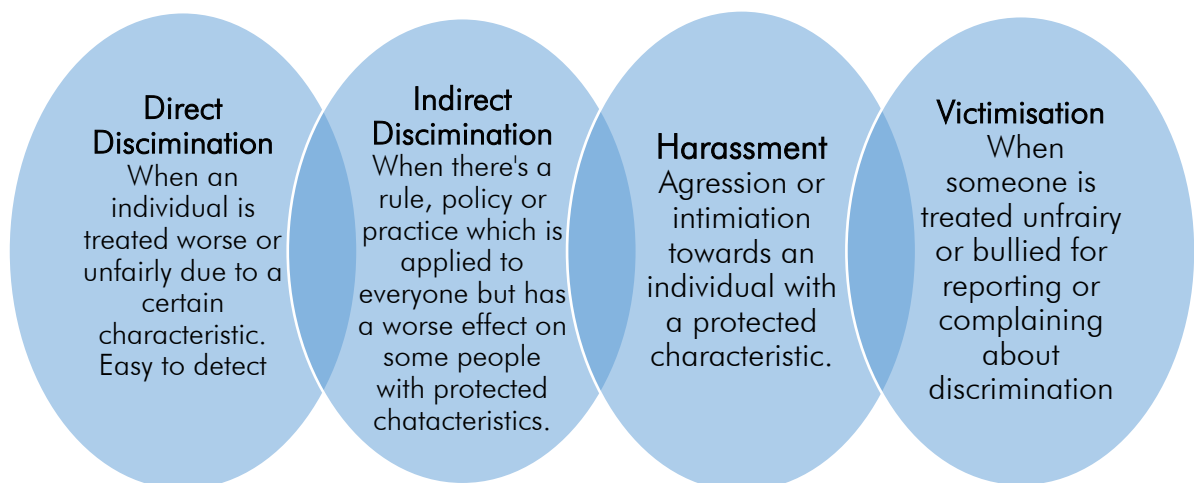
(see section on History of Democracy). Although often wavering, during this time the concept of 'equality before the law' was reestablished in Europe, meaning that everyone was perceived as equal in the judiciary process. Many critics argue that historical perspectives of fairness and equality are westernized, stating that societies before colonialism were more equal and fair, placing emphasis on the negative effects of colonialism¹.

Equality and Discrimination

In order to better grasp and understand On a general note, **discrimination** is defined as 'the act of making unfounded distinctions between human beings or groups based on a particular group they belong to, and treating them in a worse way than you would others' (Oxford Dictionary). This may include

- Prejudice
- Disadvantage
- Harassment or victimization
- Lack of understanding or lack of an attempt to understand
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments
- Lack of participation for individuals with certain characteristics.

Sadly, all societies globally have participated or participate, in various type's discrimination at some point in history. For this reason there are a variety of general **protected characteristics** established to safeguard the rights of these groups which have been vulnerable to discrimination; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Although these protections vary from country to country, 'the international human rights legal framework contains instruments to combat specific forms of discrimination' (United Nations Rule of Law 2020). With this in mind, discriminatory acts do not necessary have to be intentional to be considered unlawful. Different types of discrimination include (in alphabetical order¹)ⁱⁱ:



¹ These Protected Characteristics have been taken from the 'Equality and Human Rights Commission Protected Characteristics' United Kingdom. Protected Characteristics vary from country to country.

Protected Characteristics

Age Discrimination:

Ageism or age discrimination is treating an individual badly or less favorably because of their age. Many individuals over the age of 60 have faced discrimination as they are considered part of the vulnerable groups which has affected their employment and work life, their access to resources and transport, their legal rights etc. Age discrimination also affects younger people 40+ when seeking employment.



Example: an employer firing an individual over the age of 60 on no grounds except for older age.

Disability Discrimination:

Disability discrimination is the unequal and bad treatment of an individual for any reason which relates to their disability this includes, harassment, victimization, direct and indirect discrimination. A disability may be a mental or physical condition which has a large and long-term impact on an individual's

ability to commence with normal everyday life. This definition includes people who are receiving treatment that relieves the symptoms completely, as without their treatment they would struggle to survive.



examples: visually or hearing impaired individuals denied access to transport due to the infrastructure would be disability discrimination.

Gender Reassignment Discrimination

Also known as transsexual, transgender, trans male or trans female, Gender reassignment discrimination is being discriminated against on the basis of their protected characteristic (gender). Gender reassignment encompasses a personal process of moving from your birth sex to your preferred gender which does not necessarily have to involve a medical process, surgery or specific treatment. An individual is under the protected characteristic if they are proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process for the purpose of reassigning the individuals' sex. They are consequently, altering physiological or other characteristics of their sex (Equality and Human Right Commission 2020).



example: discriminating against a transgender employee or treating them less favorably due them taking absence/sick leave from work for the purpose of gender reassignment surgery or if the their treatment is unreasonable.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Marriage and Civil Partnership discrimination is when an individuals or group is



treated differently or unfavorably due their status as married or in a civil partnership. This encompasses same sex marriage and civil partnerships.

Example: if once married, a woman is dismissed from certain duties due to their boss believing married

women should work less.

Pregnancy and Maternity Discrimination

Pregnancy and Maternity discrimination is when an individual is treated unfairly, harassed or victimized due to them being pregnant, breastfeeding or because they have recently given birth or are sick due to their pregnancy or maternity. This encompasses any restriction to access and bias and mistreatment an individual may face.



example: a breastfeeding mother is told to stop breastfeeding on a bus because another passenger complained.

Race Discrimination:

Race discrimination is when an individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against, harassed or victimized due their race. Generally speaking, the definition of race includes colour, nationality, ethnic origins and national origins. This encompasses anything from the passport one holds to the colour of their skin. An individual can be discriminated against based on more than one characteristic of their race.



example: if a letting agency will not let someone rent out a flat because of their race

Religion or Belief Discrimination:

Religion and belief discrimination is when an individual is directly or indirectly discriminated against, harassed or victimized due to their religion (or lack of) or beliefs. Along with religions, beliefs may also include philosophical beliefs, for example a strong belief and practice against man-made climate change. The discrimination may be direct; for example an employer



hiring someone because they share the same religion, or indirect; an employer changing meeting times during an employee's prayer times.

example: a woman is told that her hijab is not appropriate for work.

Sex Discrimination:



Sex discrimination is when an individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against, harassed or victimized because of their sex, are perceived as a certain sex or are connected to someone of a particular sex. There can be direct and indirect discrimination, harassment including

humiliation or offense and sexual harassment which includes being violated, offended or degraded in a sexual manner and harassment due to an individual's refusal to put up with sexual harassment.

Sexual Orientation Discrimination:

Sexual Orientation discrimination is when an individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against, harassed or victimized because of their sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation includes orientation towards people of the opposite sex, the same sex or both sexes; lesbian, gay, straight/heterosexual or bisexual.

example: an individual who has expressed their sexual orientation is bullied or harassed in any environment.



There are exceptions to preferential treatment towards any individual in work environments if:

- Belonging to a particular group is essential for the job (occupational requirement). *E.g. if you must be female for a job involving working with women.*
- If an organization is taking positive action towards staff diversity. *E.g. if a company is attempting to employ more people of colour*

- The company offers preferred treatment to a group.
e.g. if an LGBTQ+ charity is working specifically with individuals from the LGBTQ+ community.

Question: Are there any other 'protected characteristics' or groups you think have been facing inequality and discrimination which should be added?

Do you know someone who?



Has a criminal record



Is female



Is older than 60 years old



Has a baby



Is a Person of Colour (POC)



Is part of the LGBTQ+ community



Is an ethnic minority



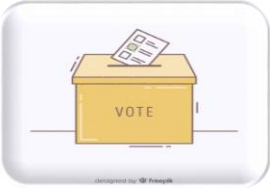
Has a physical disability



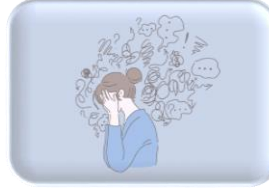
Is from a lower income background



Has a neurodevelopmental disorder (Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia)



Votes for a different political party



Has a mental disability



Did not go to school

Equality and Fairness

In conversations surrounding equality, many people use the words 'equality' and 'fairness' interchangeably, however, there is a crucial difference between the two. Equality has to do with treating each individual in the same way and providing each individual with the same access and resources regardless of their needs. **Fairness** however, also described as 'equity', has to do with the needs each individual has in order for them to be equal to their counterparts.

For example, Figure 1 shows three individuals watching a game. They are all given the same number and size of boxes to stand on in order to watch the game, thus they are being treated equally. Due to their height however, person C is unable to watch the game, even with the help of the box provided meaning the help provided was insufficient to meet his needs. Figure 2 depicts fair treatment; each person receives a different amount of help because they each receive only what they need to see beyond the fence. Ironically, the differentiation between fairness and equality raises questions on how equal equality really is.

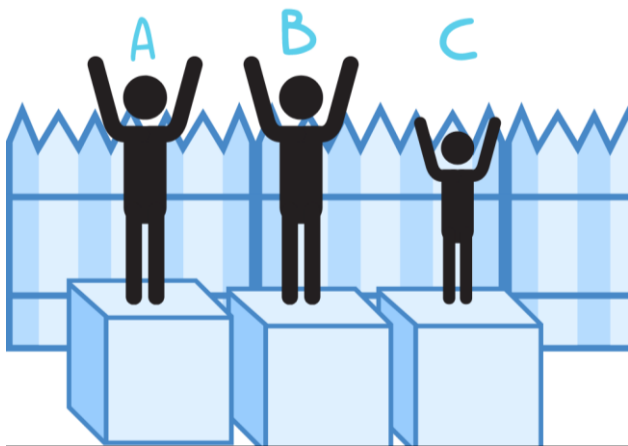


Figure 2 Equality

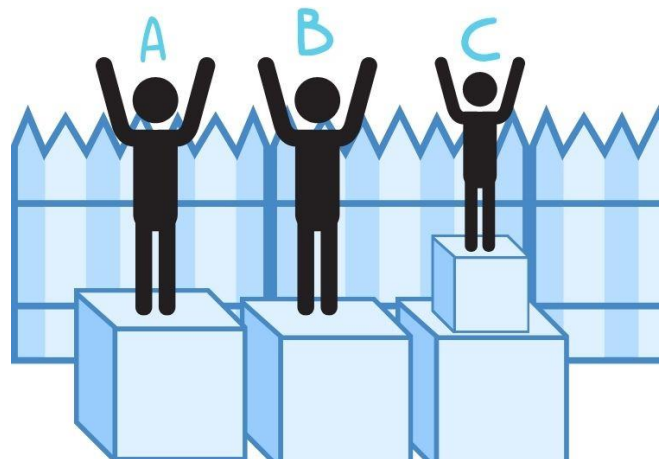


Figure 1 Fairness

Democracy

Defining Democracy

The history of humanity has shown that democratic ideals of inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency can only be achieved when laws, policies, measures, and practices that address inequalities are in place. Democratic values support the belief that an orderly society can exist in which freedom is preserved. But order and freedom must be balanced.

“Democratic forms of government are those in which the laws are made by the same people to whom they apply (and for that reason they are autonomous norms), while in autocratic forms of government the law-makers are different from those to whom the laws are addressed (and are therefore heteronomous norms)”ⁱⁱⁱ

The **political equality** of all citizens is an essential principle of democracy. There are no second-class citizens in a democracy. A further principle of democracy is that the just powers of government are derived in the **consent of the governed**. Citizens consent by participating in processes of government, especially voting in elections for bodies that make and execute laws. Another major principle of democracy is **popular sovereignty**. This is the idea that the whole body of the polity’s citizens, or “the People,” is the ultimate political authority and sole source of the authority of government. Popular sovereignty², a state of affairs in which the people exercise ultimate control over their government, although easily confused is not the same as democracy. Popular sovereignty is compatible with forms of popular fascism in which a dictator carries the genuine and

² Popular sovereignty is the principle that the authority of a state and its government are created and sustained by the consent of its people, through their elected representatives, who are the source of all political power.

spontaneous approval of an entire people, including minorities.^{iv} Properly practiced, democracies should not only adhere to the 'rule of the majority', but should also protect and represent **the minorities** in a society for this reason there is the '**rule of majority**' vs the '**decisions by consensus**'.

Rule of Majority: principle that the greater number (in opinion/vote/existence) should exercise greater power.

Consensus Decision-Making: Decision making through seeking to reach an agreement between parties as opposed to majority rule.

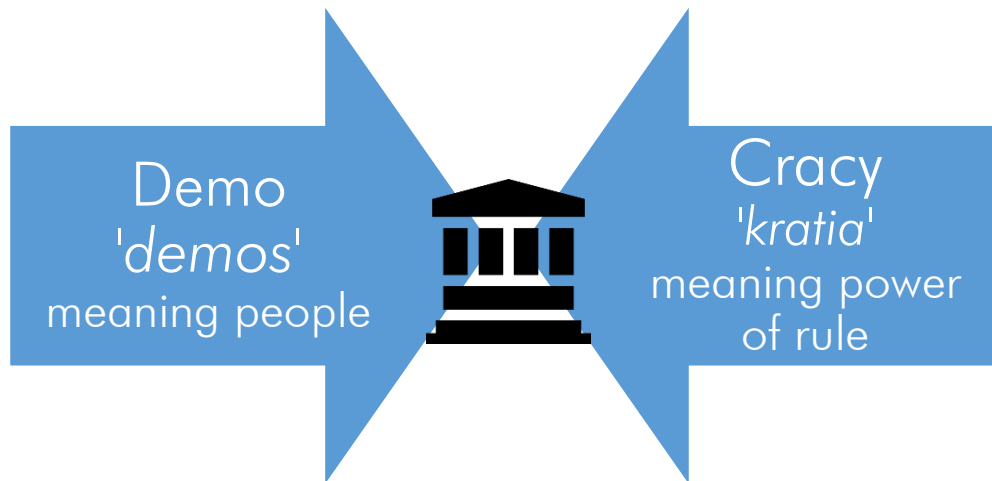
In a democracy, governments must function in a way which reflects the desire, values and wishes of the society which it governs as well as practice 'equality before the law' ^v, meaning that all persons are treated equal in the judiciary process, including people in power.

According to American political scientist Larry Diamond, democracy consists of four key elements:

- a political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections
- the active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life
 - protection of the human rights of all citizens
- a rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

Democracy & its History

In general terms, democracy is a system of governance where all citizens have equal voice and involvement in the political process. The word originates from the two Greek words 'demos'; which means people and 'kratia' which means power of rule thus meaning 'rule of the people'.^{vi} Democracies therefore place the decision-making process largely in the hands of the people it governs.



Ancient Athenians established what is thought to be the first democracy around 508-507BC, although this is widely contested today as ancient societies such as the Incas are also considered to have had some form of democracy. Nevertheless, for the time period, the existence of a democratic system was revolutionary if we consider that most societies at the time were monarchies or ruled by an elite. Ancient Athens is therefore considered the birthplace of democracy, however today we know it was a **flawed democracy**, due to the fact that it did not see all people equally. *Women, slaves, people who did not own land and children were not allowed to vote* and did not have the same rights as men governing.

Throughout history, there are vast moments in time and key historical events such as movements and struggles, which contributed to a fairer and more

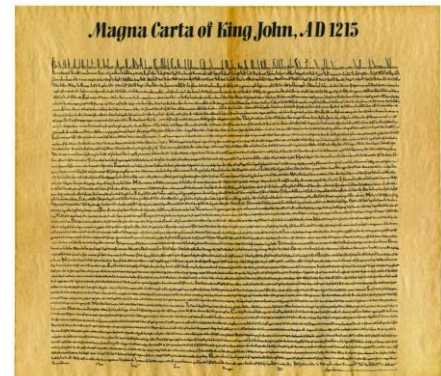
equal government system, consequently leading to today's democracy in Europe.

Some of these include:

Magna Carta – United Kingdom

1215

Under the rule and agreed to by King John of England, the Magna Carta was a document which expressed that everyone, including royalty, were subject to the law. The document was created to appease the political crisis brought about due to abuse of power.



French Revolution - France

1789-1790

During this time there was prevalent discontent among French citizens with the economic policies of King Louis XVI and the monarchy itself. Proceeding his execution, France moved from an absolute monarchy to a feudal system which placed emphasis on the will of the people.

Anti-Colonial struggles

20th Century

The struggle against imperial rule in colonized countries. These movements against colonialism and towards independence were crucial in allowing citizens to determine the governance and future of their own countries and people. Generally,

imperial rule did not treat local people equally to themselves or even among each other.



Question: *How equal was the country you live in now 100 years ago? What has changed and why?*

Democracy in the Modern World

Democracy derives its moral strength from two core values:

Individual Autonomy:

Independence in ones actions and thoughts. To be able to take control over ones own situation.

Equality:

The idea that all citizens should have equal voice and opportunity.

Consequently, democracy requires equal treatment of individuals to the degree that citizens are individual agents in the self-government process, for example through the implementation of free and equal voting for all. Democracy requires a democratic agency that is equal otherwise it is not a democracy, however this definition is broad, encompassing a wide range of interpretations and systems. There are so many models of democratic government evident throughout the world that it is often easier to define democracy by what it is not rather than by what it is^{vii}. Therefore, in order to fully understand the concept and revolutionary element of democracy we must first understand the various forms of governance practiced throughout the world and in history:

| Types of Government | Definition ^{viii} |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anarchy | State of absence of Law. Abolishing any existing governments and create a society where each individual has the freedom to exercise their will. |
| Democracy | The people or their elected representatives govern themselves. All citizens have an equal voice and can vote freely and fairly. |
| Monarchy | A government which has a hereditary head of the state which is a king or queen. Their power may be regulated by a constitution or they may retain absolute power. |
| Totalitarian | A government with a single political authority. Requires complete subservience to the state. |
| Oligarchy | Power rests with a small percentage of families or people. Normally class related, the 'superior' group runs the state of affairs |
| Plutocracy | Rule funded and powered by the wealthiest within the society, often behind the scenes. |
| Theocracy | Rule is implemented by priests ruling in the name of a religion or by individuals who are seen as 'divinely guided'. The divine order is seen as absolute and therefore there is no room for dissent |
| Communism | A socialist movement which aims to establish a classless society. Private property is abolished and the state operates industry. |

In today's societies, there are generally two types of democracy, direct and indirect. **Direct democracy** is one where policy initiatives are decided by the people directly as opposed to **indirect democracy** (or **representative democracy**) which is founded on the basis of elected officials in a position to represent a group of people. Today, most democracies around the world are indirect, however this is not the only defining element of a democracy, especially if we consider that no two democracies are the same.

Some examples of the differing elements of democracies around the world are:

Presidential vs Parliamentary Democracies

In a presidential democracy, the head of state is often also the head of government, and the executive power is constitutionally vested in a single individual while in parliamentary democracies executive power is vested in the legislature (deliberative assembly).

Federal or Unitary Democracies

In a federal democracy/government the power is divided between notional government or federal government and local governments or state governments while a unitary democracy the power lies in one central authority.

Examples of Federal Democracies: United States, Austria, India, Iraq, Russia, Pakistan, Sudan, Germany.

Examples of Unitary Democracies: United Kingdom, Spain, Ireland, Norway, Cyprus, Iran, Italy (among many).

Proportional Voting Democracies or Majoritarian Systems

In proportional voting the percentage of seats or representation held by a party will be approximately equal to the percentage of their support by the voters while majoritarian voting systems the party with the largest amount of support is able to win all of the seats.

Countries with Proportional Representation: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary and Italy.

Countries with Majoritarian Representation: Senate of the Philippines.

Democracies which are also monarchies

Many countries of the world implement democracies and monarchies simultaneously. They are often called 'constitutional monarchies' meaning that the sovereign (royal) exercises authority with regards to a written constitution.

Examples: United Kingdom, Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Malaysia and Japan.

Problems with Democracy

Because democracy concerns itself with maintaining equality, fair rule and representation of all citizens, it is a constant state of improvement as societies change with time. Throughout the last few decades, democracies around the world have faced criticism over some of its consequences and effects.

Majority vs. Minority

The practice of representative democracy raises several problems with **minority representation**. Societies which use the electoral system (voting) often result in minorities not obtaining adequate numbers to be properly represented in government. A second problem with representative democracy and minority rights is that even if a minority does receive adequate votes to be represented, they will almost never have the necessary votes to defeat a majority. This is considered a society run by “majority rule”. Consequently, if this society is not backed up by **human rights**, policies and decisions taken by majority may be harmful to minorities^{vii}. The fundamental interests of minorities along with majorities should be safeguarded in every democratic framework by commitment to human rights principles, enforced by an appropriate legislative process, whatever the will of the majority might be.



Nationalism

With this in mind, many countries across Europe have seen a rise in right wing politics which use nationalist rhetoric to target minority groups or 'non-native' people such as refugees, migrants, religious minorities etc, often resulting in violence towards them, a clear **breach of human rights**. They often accomplish this through appealing to the support of people using the democratic notion of 'majority opinions and demands'. As a result the right **to freedom of speech** of certain groups may need to be **limited**, according on the extent of the issue and the specific cultural background, despite the significance of that right to the democratic process.



Youth and the Vote

In many countries across the world **young people do not have the legal right to vote** even though many other rights such as driving, being able to get married or drinking are legal before the age of 18. A popular argument is that young people do not involve themselves in politics or that they don't have the experience to vote, however studies have shown that young people are increasingly involved in politics and societal movements. Moreover, policies which affect the futures of young people are often dominated by the vote of older generations who will not experience the effects of policies in the long run.



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ⁱⁱⁱ Bobbio, Norberto. 1989. Democracy and dictatorship: The nature and limits of state power. Translated by Peter Kennealy. Cambridge, UK: Polity

^{iv} Post, Robert. 1998a. Democracy, popular sovereignty, and judicial review. California Law Review 86:429-43.

^v United Nations and the Rule of Law. 2020. *Equality And Non-Discrimination - United Nations And The Rule Of Law*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/human-rights/equality-and-non-discrimination/#:~:text=The%20international%20human%20rights%20legal,discrimination%2C%20or%20discrimination%20based%20on>> [Accessed 10 November 2020].

^{vi} Raaflaub, K., Ober, J., Wallace, R., Cartledge, P. and Farrar, C., 2018. *Origins Of Democracy In Ancient Greece*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

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^{viii} Wordpandit. 2020. Government Types. [online] Available at: <<https://wordpandit.com/governments-types-kinds-varieties/>> [Accessed 12 November 2020].