

ROLE PLAYING GAME: Voting on Welfare Policies

Teachers' Guide

This is an open-ended activity that gets students to understand the politics that shape policy-making in a democracy and evaluate policy outcomes based on notions of justice and equality.

Ideally, this activity can be done over two classes or two one-hour sessions. Each round can be conducted in 30 minutes and 30 minutes can be kept for an open-ended discussion.

Instructions:

There are 7 different role cards. The teacher should divide all the students in the class into seven groups. Each role card provides a profile of an economic agent that the student must take for this activity. It will include their income, wealth, profession, and backstory to provide context for this character. I have provided multiple cards for each role. Students can pick cards at random and then those with the same role card can get organized into a group.

This activity can be introduced to students as a way of understanding multiple perspectives which shape policy-making in a democratic system like India. Each student will be given an economic role and they have the freedom to imagine what choices and desires would shape an agent's decision making. Students in a group should discuss each decision together. However, a student must assume that agents are rational and do not make decisions that are contradictory to their interests: a businessman should not choose a policy that increases his taxes and wage payments to laborers.

In the first round, students can be given all the five welfare themes and three policy choices for each. They can be given 20 – 30 mins to discuss in a group. After this the groups can meet in class and the teacher can have voting on each issue. Every group will designate one member to discuss their choice of policy.

The second round is called the veil of ignorance round based on Rawls notion of justice. In the first round students will learn how different economic actors have different interests towards a policy. In this round they have to make a decision on a policy taking into account the interest of all agents. Each student will vote independently on each issue.

At the end of the round the result of round 1 and 2 will be presented and students can discuss the following questions:

1. In the second round, you did not know your role or position in life. How did this affect your views about these economic policy issues?

2. After playing this game, do you think fairness in economic policy should be based on achieving equal outcomes in society or providing a process for equal opportunity?

Why is it not always possible to have both?

3. Based on this exercise, what lessons did you learn about resolving economic policy issues?

There are no right or wrong answers. This activity gets students to think about the process of policymaking and engage with the complication of make fair policies which will benefit some agents more than others. The teacher use this activity to discuss the politics that shape a specific events from the Indian economy book.

Economic Ballot

ISSUE 1: Government Revenue

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Option 1	Y				Y		Y
Option 2		Y		Y		Y	
Option 3			Y				

ISSUE 2: Unemployment Assistance

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Option 1				Y			
Option 2	Y	Y					Y
Option 3			Y		Y	Y	

ISSUE 3: Immigration Law

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Option 1			Y		Y	Y	
Option 2		Y		Y			
Option 3	Y						Y

ISSUE 4 : Health Insurance

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Option 1							
Option 2		Y					Y
Option 3	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	

ISSUE 5: Public Distribution System

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Option 1		Y					
Option 2	Y		Y				
Option 3				Y	Y	Y	Y

VEIL OF IGNORANCE GAME

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
ISSUE 1	10	15	2
ISSUE 2	6	7	13
ISSUE 3	16	6	12
ISSUE 4	0	20	14
ISSUE 5	13	19	2