

LESSON 6: INCOME DISTRIBUTION

Lesson aim:

- ✎ To explain income distribution and why it is important.

Learning objectives:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- ✎ understand what income distribution is about and identify factors which influence income.

In-class activity: Introduction

Ask students the following:

- ✎ What does income inequality mean?
- ✎ Do all occupations pay the same salary? Why do you think that is?
- ✎ What factors do you think influence **income** for individuals?
- ✎ What factors do you think influence the level of **wealth** for individuals?
- ✎ Is this fair? Explain your answers.

Individual homework activity: Salary search

Ask students to find out the approximate annual salaries of the following (the list can be changed as required):

- ✎ Gaelic footballer
- ✎ Nurse
- ✎ Doctor
- ✎ Clerical worker
- ✎ Hairdresser/beautician
- ✎ Chief Executive of a large corporation/multi-national/bank

- ✎ Bank official
- ✎ Premier league footballer

Activity review and discussion:

Discuss the findings with the students using the following questions to examine the issues more closely.

- ✎ What was found? Was it surprising? Why?
- ✎ Taking a high earner and a low earner, is it right/fair/justified that one earns so much more than the other? Explain. Which job do you consider more important? If this job wasn't performed anymore what impact might it have on society?
- ✎ What accounts for the differences in wages? How are wages set or decided? What might be the biggest influence on wages?
- ✎ Who gets to have a say in their wages? Are these systems fair? What should or could be done to change the situation? (Hint: Unions help members to obtain a decent wage rate through collective bargaining and the power of a group of workers.)
- ✎ Are the findings equal, fair and right? Look for explanations for their answers.

In-class activity: Discussion

Provide the following list to students (which can be changed to suit the class) and ask them to choose one statement and explain whether they agree or disagree with it. The statements could also be used as the topic for an essay or a class debate.

- ✎ Everyone is free to earn what they wish, it's their own fault if they are poor.
- ✎ Those who are disadvantaged by society are entitled to be supported.
- ✎ How one lives their life is determined by occupation and salary.

LESSON 6: INCOME DISTRIBUTION (CONTINUED)

- No-one is entitled to free handouts, everyone should be made to work.
- Opportunity and advantage are inextricably linked to income and wealth.
- Education is the key to opportunity.
- Everyone is born equal but not with the same opportunities.

Class discussion: Influences on income

Ask students what are the likely causes of differences in income amongst individuals? Take a different contribution from each student and list them on the blackboard.

Next assign a different reason (where possible) to each student and ask them to investigate how this particular reason might impact on income. Time should be given to students to investigate their reason properly and may be best given as a homework exercise.