



IMPARTENCE OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

Political Science

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ABSTRACT

For political systems to be representative, all parts of society must be included. When young people are disenfranchised or disengaged from political processes, a significant portion of the population has little or no voice or influence in decisions that affect group members' lives. A key consequence is the undermining of political systems' representativeness. To make a difference in the longer term, it is essential that young people are engaged in formal political processes and have a say in formulating today's and tomorrow's politics. Inclusive political participation is not only a fundamental political and democratic right but also is crucial to building stable and peaceful societies and developing policies that respond to the specific needs of younger generations. For young people to be adequately represented in political institutions, processes, and decision-making, and in particular in elections, they must know their rights and be given the necessary knowledge and capacity to participate in a meaningful way at all levels.

KEYWORDS

Political system, Society, Young People, Skills

INTRODUCTION

There are more young people today than ever before. More than half of the world population is under 30 years of age, and one-fifth of it is made up of youth aged 15-25. Despite this high proportion of the world population, youth are vastly underrepresented in political institutions. Young people are a key part of any democracy. We believe that it is not only their right to be included in political decision-making, but also that their perspectives, ideas, talents and energy are key to addressing many challenges faced by people of all ages.

One of our goals, therefore, has always been to strengthen youth participation through promoting increased youth representation in politics and decision-making, and enhancing the integration of youth perspectives in parliaments. We have thus succeeded in shifting the discourse from promotion of youth "consultation" to youth "representation", an important step in the wider engagement of young people in democracy. Working with parliaments, international organizations such as the United Nations, youth parliaments, civil society organizations and academia, we encourage youth participation.

Definition Of Youth People's Political Participation

Young people as girls and boys, women and men, between the ages of 13 and 25. Their political participation can take many forms, including all the ways young people engage in civic life, practice active citizenship or give input into processes that determine policy and practice. This may involve, for example, serving on a school or city council, voting in an election, or participating in a poverty reduction strategy process, the planning process for a road construction project or in the budget process of a local government.

Nature Of Youth Participation In Politics

There are various ways in which adolescents participate in politics. In democracies, participation is not only about voting. There are some indicators showing the youth's social responsibilities. These indicators are being knowledgeable about the political process and understanding it, thinking techniques, skill of using information technology, participation in media, interaction and discussion skills, and participation in voluntary activities. Youth participation is very important for modern societies as well. This is because; social exclusion and youth participation are considered to be two opposing concepts, and it is emphasized that social inclusion policies cannot be successful unless they ensure youth participation. Social inclusion refers to ensuring the participation of individuals who have difficulty in participating due to reasons such as poverty, lack of education, religion, language, and race in social life. Hence, young people are also considered to be among disadvantageous groups contained in social inclusion.

Youth participation varies and differs. While some young people are willing and eager to participate, some others are deprived of support for participation or may not have adequate knowledge about how to participate. Basically, youth's awareness and actual consciousness increase if the decisions concerning them are not taken without regard

to them and they organize social actions themselves. Youth participation will increase their experience in participation, enable them to use their political rights, help them democratize, and allow active participation. Not only young people but also adults have to be conscious so that these positive factors are put into practice.

Young people need to be informed above all for participation to be ensured. In other words, young people have to acquire and use decision-making and participation skills to become influential and active citizens. The research entitled "The Political Awareness of School Leavers" conducted by Straddling in the USA in 1977 concluded that most of the young people of that day had inadequate knowledge on local, national, and international issues. Today's conditions and opportunities to reach the information are much more developed than those days. At the present time, young people are expected to obtain information about participation in various ways. For example, schools are regarded as places where individuals are prepared for life and provided with theoretical knowledge about participation, human rights, and democracy. On the other hand, it is reported that citizenship education given through schools or lifelong learning practices increases level of knowledge about participation, but does not raise interest and action in participation in some countries including England. Nevertheless, it is stated that schools are the most appropriate place for acquiring knowledge about political participation in a lot of schools and conditions. Participation is not something to be learned only at schools; on the contrary, it will be strengthened as one takes place in democratic processes.

Youth participation is interest. Level of interest in participation and models of participation may vary by gender, educational level, and the place of residence. To increase interest in politics and participation among young people, it is necessary to inform them at local and national levels, make politicians accountable about young people and open to representation, and operate participation channels for young people. Interest and knowledge are two highly important factors influential on participation. This is because; lack of knowledge and political apathy affect youth participation and are considered to be the basic indicators of low participation rates in elections. Young people can raise their levels of interest and knowledge about participation in some ways. Among these ways, media is the most important one. Young people are considered to be the basic consumers of the information produced by media.

Benefits Of Youth Participation In Politics

Participatory approaches have a strong cultural backbone, given the weight of the rights-based approach, the participatory turn and the consequent changes in governance. Different reasons for promoting participation have been articulated in the literature on participation. These benefits can be summarised in the following ways:

- **Rights-based Perspective:** Children and young people have a right to participate and be heard in the matters concerning them. Promoting participation means respecting this fundamental right.
- **Developmental Perspective:** Participation does not happen by

itself. Like any other form of social behaviour, education and training are needed to help younger generations to influence society. Youth participation is needed because it helps young people learn vital citizenship competences. These include learning how to influence, discuss and debate together, how to make a difference and understanding how processes of decision making work

- **Service Perspective:** When the young people participate and express their views and hopes there is a better basis for policy making, the implementation is easier and services are in general more effective when the actual users are listened to and their experiential knowledge is taken into account
- **Democracy Perspective:** Engaging young people in the decision making is the way to make democracy stronger. There are at least two dimensions of this. First, the more citizens are interested in common matters, the more likely they are to engage democratically. The citizenship perspective emphasises the need to find ways that interest, engage and empower young people. Second, from the perspective of the political system, if there are numerous ways to make an influence on the system, more people are better able to contribute. The more people are engaged in democratic life, the stronger the mandate of the democratic system.
- **Community Perspective:** the more groups feel they are accepted as legitimate members of a community, the safer and more comfortable and creative the community is likely to be since people have an interest in maintaining the community. Participation is a way to ensure that local communities are inclusive and responsive to different needs.
- **Inclusive Society Perspective:** Organisations learn, albeit in the different ways than the individuals do. Learning what the young people want, what they hold as important and what type of changes they want to see in the society enriches our democracy because it ensures that more voices are heard. Promoting youth participation is a way of securing that different perspectives are heard in the public sphere. Therefore, at the end of the day, youth participation is not only about the young: it concerns all of us.

Youth Participation And Democracy

The ways of promoting participation of the young people reveal how societies understand democracy. If youth participation is understood as taking part in the already existing structures without having the chance to make the community different from what it was, the picture of democracy is not complete. Democratic action is undertaken with others to change societies and existing modes of thinking. Youth participation can expand and enrich public life provided that the democratic structures supporting participation are created and redesigned to meet the demands of the young people and enable them to get in communication with adult society. The ideals of democracy have changed over the years. Our current version of democracy is a product of history. Democracy is a topic of continuous debate and reconceptualisation. In order to document the full scope of possible participation structures, it is important to analyse the full scope of democratic life itself: representative democracy and its ideal conception of citizens electing delegations is contrasted with the ideals of participatory and deliberative democracy, and their emphasis on participation in everyday settings and democratic, open and free discussion. Different conceptions of democracy have different ideals of what constitutes a democratic culture and how citizens create a different future democratically. Theories of democracy have been used to analyse participatory mechanisms and to further point out the need to develop different strategies. Representative democracy is a form of governance where elected politicians (and sometimes office holders) must renew their position in elections. It has proved to be an effective way of changing the government when people are unhappy with the way they are ruled. Not all citizens, though, are capable of taking part in elections. Children and young people are excluded from elections. The absence of children in the field of traditional representative democracy is based on the developmental perspective which assumes that adults are more capable of speaking for children and young people, and are able to make more informed decisions on behalf of all members of society. Consequently, in most European countries it is thought that those under 18 years of age are not mature enough to make informed decisions on matters affecting them. The absence of young people in the representative field might lead to a generational gap where the opinions, discourses and advocacy of the young people are omitted in the decision making and the youth are not interested in communicating with a system that does not properly take them into account.

CONCLUSION

In new and emerging democracies, the inclusion of young people in formal political processes is important from the start. See Annex: A Spotlight on Countries in Transition. Young people's active contributions can bring democratic values to life, leading to the overturning of authoritarian practices. In countries where young people have led protests that have forced authoritarian regimes from power, they are likely to feel significant frustration if they are not included in new formal decision-making procedures. This can destabilize democratization and accelerate conflict dynamics.

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