

New Zealand- A Liberal Democracy

New Zealand is a Liberal Democracy - What do you understand by this statement?

Liberal democracy can be divided into two distinguishable foundations; liberalism and democracy. Liberalism foregrounds the security of individuals rights and freedoms. This is emphasised through freedom of speech, assembly, religion, and the press. The concept of liberalism also upholds the rule of law whereby the government's capacity is restrained by constitutional constraints and the separation of powers. Democracy, on the other hand, is often described as "Government of the people, by the people and for the people", first said by former American president Abraham Lincoln. Democracy entails governance by the society, where citizens have the right to engage in political decision-making through impartial elections. Furthermore, it also pertains to the protection of the rights of the minority and the existence of independent institutions. This includes the non-partisan judiciary and a free press. These institutions commit to ensure accountability and prevent the concentration of power. Therefore in a Liberal democracy, these two concepts are conjoined together to form a system of government that advocates for both popular sovereignty and individual liberty. Citizens are given an assurance of particular freedoms and protections under the law, while also being privileged and encouraged to participate in the political processes. As well as having the ability to hold their leaders accountable through elections and check and balances on a regular basis.

Looking at the current education system, what would you suggest should be done to improve the understanding of democracy among young people?

There are copious amounts of that we can implement in the current education system of New Zealand that would improve the understanding of democracy among young people. Some of these ways include: Holding elections, incorporating more democracy focused subjects into the curriculum, especially for the junior school (which are year 9s and 10s), as well as having guest speakers who are knowledgeable about democracy come into schools and create awareness on the topic of democracy.

Holding Mock Elections: Mock elections deliver a hands-on experience for students to partake in an electoral process. It can teach them about the importance of voting, the diversity in political opinions, and the structure of how elections work. Through organisations and participation in mock elections, students can expand on their knowledge of democracy and gain a deeper understanding of democracy in action.

Curriculum Integration: Integrating democracy into the curriculum guarantees that students obtain comprehensive knowledge on democracy practices, instructions as well as principles. This is especially beneficial for students in their junior years of high school (years 9 and 10) as it can educate them and help build greater understanding on the topic of democracy. This can be done by studying the history of democracy, analysing documents that are in relation to democracy as well as discussing the challenges faced in democratic governance. Embedding democracy into the curriculum, students have the opportunity to delve deep into the matters of democracy and engineer a refined understanding of democracy and its complexities.

Guest Speakers: Guest speakers such as local politicians and community leaders are an excellent way to educate on democracy as they provide real-world views on the topic. Guest speakers can discuss current democratic issues, share their experiences and answer questions from the students as a way to connect the gap between the theoretical and practical aspects of democracy. Hearing from people who are actively involved in democratic process can motivate students and make democratic concepts more tangible and practical.

What affirmative action can be taken by young students to strengthen democracy?

In this day and age, it is important for people, especially young students to understand the concept of democracy and implement corroborative initiatives. There are a multitudinous number of mechanisms young individuals can take in order to strengthen democracy. Personally at our school, some ways we can strengthen democracy are by inviting local knowledgeable people to speak and elaborate about democracy, allowing students to have a say on the student leadership board, as well as providing students a chance to express their opinions on other improvements they think can be made to the school.

Inviting Local Leaders To Elaborate On Democracy: These elaborations by knowledgeable people provide valuable education about democracy and what it entails, such as voting rights, freedom of speech, and

other civic responsibilities. Showcasing local leaders as role models will ensure that the youngsters are inspired to participate actively in the society and consider future leadership opportunities. The delivery of important information about democracy will also enhance creative and critical thinking as students will develop the ability to consider and evaluate various opinions and actively partake in constructive debates.

Students Allowed To Vote For Students Leadership Board: In doing so, will provide some basic understanding of democratic processes, such as voting and campaigning. Students understand the importance of their voice and the momentousness of making wise decisions. Allowing such elections will enhance leadership skills as it allows the candidates to articulate their ideas and engage with peers. This will be an experience for students to learn about fair competition and respect of the opponent's perspectives.

Allowing Students To Express Opinions And Address Issues: It fosters a culture of free speech. By allowing students to express their opinions and have their say in schools will guarantee that they learn the importance of their voice and develop an essential skill of communicating through constructive conversations and reach consensus. Adding on, it also prepares students for civic engagement by giving them an opportunity to voice their opinions for changes and understanding the ways through which wider issues are addressed. One example through which students can be involved in school decision making is through permitting them to decide what the money from a recent fundraiser will go towards. This is a way to ensure that students learn the importance of their voices and also gain leadership skills.

What practical steps could improve the understanding and participation of the post school age population?

Some practical steps that could be taken to improve the understanding and participation of democracy of the post school age population can include facilitating access to information about democracy and its processes, empowering local initiatives, setting up education and awareness campaigns, government transparency as well as setting up incentives and recognition programs.

Facilitating access to information: guaranteeing easy access to impartial information about the political contenders, parties and issues through publicly funded programmes or initiatives can be a way to educate the population of post school age about the ins and outs of democracy.

Empowering local initiatives: Supporting local middle-class organisations that boost voter registrations, civic engagement and community advocacy can be a way to incentivise participation in those that are a part of the post school age population.

Setting up education and awareness campaigns: Setting in place civic education courses that workshops and programs that teach the basis of democracy and its processes as well as public seminars and talks that involve experts discussing democratic issues that are relevant, as well as encouraging participation and critical thinking, can both be ways to encourage participation and improve the understanding of democracy to the post school age population.

Government policies: Open data initiatives that make government data and the decision-making processes accessible as well as honest and open to the public, and public consultations that boost opportunities for citizens to feedback on the legislation and policies that are in place can both be ways to encourage participation from the post school age population in the democratic processes that take place.

Setting up incentives and recognition programs: recognition programs can help celebrate and recognise individuals and organisations that positively contribute to civic engagement and incentives such as tax credits for volunteering and/or educational credits for participation in civic education affairs.

In conclusion, democracy serves as an illuminant for cooperative empowerment and shared responsibility, whereby the voices of the people shape the society and how it is run. It fosters the fundamental rights of humans while also championing the progress of social justice and equality. It is important for young individuals to uphold the knowledge of democracy and participate in the issues of today to serve as tomorrow's leaders. As societies evolve, mechanisms to strengthen democracy need to be developed so that a better future of tomorrow is promised for all generations. Democracy has always been and will continue to be a resolute beacon, guiding every nation towards inclusivity and a better tomorrow.