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The importance of student councils in schools and colleges

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A few months ago, students from various public universities voted in new student bodies after a long hiatus. A body to act as a voice for the students, it also teaches students democratic values, such as accountability and leadership skills.

However, apart from universities, the majority of schools and colleges in this country lack a body where students can make their voices heard.

Many might ask, what's the point behind introducing democratic processes to children at such an early age? Most democracies have their voting age set at around 18. Therefore, it is important that students be exposed to democratic processes and institutions well before that age in order to ensure awareness and civic responsibility.

One of the most fundamental

misunderstandings of democracy is that you just vote, and the person who wins the majority is automatically the sovereign. This perspective ignores the nuanced structure of democracy, which ensures separation and limitation of powers, respect of basic fundamental rights, rule of law and accountability. Therefore, it's imperative to ensure students are familiarised with these concepts practically rather than theoretically at an early age.

Besides that, due to the nature and structure of most schools, it's difficult for a student to have their concerns and ideas heard, especially by the administration. A student council serves to bridge this gap. This is important because teachers generally address the macro issues, so they do not have the time to address the micro student issues. Hence, students may feel alienated from their teachers.

When students actively negotiate with their institution's administration for their demands, it can teach them how to engage in dialogues on the basis of mutual respect. A democratic society must be preceded by the recognition of the fact that differences of opinion might exist, and they're natural, and it's the responsibility of all stakeholders to solve the conflicts considerately and

reach compromises in a respectful manner.

Student councils serve exactly that purpose in this case.

When asked how the council at her school benefitted the student body, Anaya Zoya Chowdhury, a head girl at Glenrich International School, argues, "The council ensures students have a voice in school decisions. By structuring duties, maintaining daily checklists, and holding monthly meetings with the principal, we help bridge communication between students and teachers." She thinks that small steps like these encourage participation, make students feel heard, and lay the foundation for student-led initiatives that benefit everyone.

Subrata Sutradhar, a teacher at South Breeze School, explaining why his school ratified an election, states, "The school wanted to let the council show responsibility and honesty, and also create a communication bridge between the administration and the students. We also want them to prioritise student interests and represent them in front of the school administration." By getting students accustomed to the proceedings of democracy, schools, in turn, instil values of a responsible citizen.

