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Participatory Democracy Makes Better Citizens

In 2015, the Japanese government lowered the legal voting age from twenty years old to eighteen years old, increasing the number of young Japanese voters. Some claim that allowing younger Japanese people to vote will increase the likelihood that they will participate in creating a better future for Japan. Others insist that it is counterproductive to allow younger Japanese people to vote because they are unconcerned with elections and uninterested in politics. However, the social circle around younger Japanese, like their parents and their teachers, can help them understand voting and elections. In fact, lowering the legal voting age to eighteen years old is a good goal because its advantages outweigh its disadvantages.

Lowering the voting age to eighteen years old will indirectly increase the political power of younger Japanese people. In the current aging society, politicians tend to be more concerned with elderly people's issues because they vote more in elections, but this causes the Japanese government to devote more resources to things that older Japanese people care about than to things that younger Japanese people care about. Japanese politicians are more likely to handle problems that younger Japanese care about, such as employment possibilities, educational opportunities, and life satisfaction, if younger Japanese people vote in larger numbers. Indeed, according to Hideki Makihara, a politician of the House of Representatives, "many young generation's people should take part in building up a country by means of democracy, and make a satisfactory politics"

(author's translation, Takahashi, Kobayashi, & Kan, 2008, p. 118). As a result, young people who have the right to vote will be able to change the situation in Japan for the future because young people's views would have a gradual and indirect influence on politics.

Furthermore, lowering the voting age to eighteen will also lead to a larger number of young Japanese politicians, which will directly increase the political clout of younger Japanese people. This is because the more young Japanese people learn about elections and voting, the more they will be curious about politics; thus, the number of young Japanese people who want to run for political office would increase, which would directly increase the political power of younger Japanese people. Actually, according to Ryohei Takahashi, a representative of an NPO related to elections, young people need to be educated so that they see the relevance and feasibility of joining politics as a way to change society (Takahashi, et al., 2008). Therefore, lowering the voting age to eighteen years old makes young people a member of society and a power in society.

However, not everyone agrees with the idea that lowering the voting age to eighteen years old is a good idea, and another view is that younger Japanese people are too immature and juvenile to participate in politics, especially when compared to young people in other democratic countries. This argument proceeds as follows: because young Japanese people are too puerile, it is pointless to grant them the right to vote in consequential political elections. However, this viewpoint is based on stereotypes; younger Japanese people vote at similar rates to younger people in other democratic countries, and therefore one must admit that young Japanese people are no more or less immature than young people in other democracies. Accordingly, one of the arguments against lowering the voting age to eighteen is based on bias, not on facts, and as such it is an illegitimate reason.

In conclusion, lowering the voting age to eighteen would bring many benefits for younger Japanese people. The Japanese government should listen to a lot of voices, not only older Japanese

people but also younger Japanese people to resolve Japan's present problems. Also, voting is an excellent catalyst to entice young Japanese people to run for office. The fact that lowering the voting age to eighteen brings only benefits means that the Japanese government should lower the voting age to eighteen and that younger Japanese people would be better citizens.

References

Takahashi, R., Kobayashi, K., & Kan, G. (2008). *18sai ga seiji wo kaeru* [Eighteen year olds will change politics]. Tokyo: Gendaijin bunsha.