SPEAKING OUT

What about our views?

Strict measures brought in by governments to tackle the spread of the coronavirus pandemic have put many restraints on the lives of young people and their families. Yet young people themselves have been given little say in the matter. This lesson looks at the right to freedom of expression and what this means for children and young people in a digital age. It highlights the need to engage learners in issues which are topical and controversial, and demonstrates how this can be achieved in the virtual classroom.

Learners will be able to:

► Reflect on their thoughts and feelings about the way the pandemic is being handled;

► Analyse the right to freedom of expression and what it means for children and young people;

► Identify ways in which technology can help them express their social and political views;

► Develop their communicative skills and openness to other beliefs, world views and practices.

STIMULUS

Video:
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-uk-lockdown-boris-johnson-rules-restrictions-stay-home-police-a9420231.html
Or
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/25/uk-coronavirus-lockdown-rules-what-you-can-and-cannot-do

Look for a video explaining the rules brought in to tackle the pandemic in your country. Or introduce the rules in another way, e.g., a quiz.

Go into as much detail on the rules as learners can handle.

DISCUSSION

After the video:

► How have these new rules affected you and your family?

► What do you think about them? In your opinion:
- How clear are they?
- How easy are they carry out?
- How well are they working?
- How fair are they?

► How important is it for government to listen to the views of young people like you on these and similar issues? Why do you think this?

► Should young people wait until someone asks them before they express their views? Or should they just go ahead and say what they think? Why do you think this?

► How can you use technology to get your views across to a wider audience? What different methods are there?

Small-group work is good for this, but not essential.

Encourage learners to give reasons for their opinions.

Give an example to prompt thinking, e.g. proposals for a new law which will adversely affect young people.

CONCLUSION

Go through some of the ways people use digital technology to express their social and political views, such as texts, email, social media, on-line petitions, official websites (including government, ombudsman, youth parliament, media, NGOs).

Emphasize the importance of young people speaking up about matters that affect them, and the benefits of this both for society and for young people themselves.

Look for a useful on-line summary, e.g. https://medium.com/swlh/how-to-avoid-slacktivism-a-guide-for-digital-activists-81b4d7b12530

This is an opportunity here to mention the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 12 & 13.

ASSIGNMENT

Learners write a mini-blog expressing their views on the handling of the coronavirus emergency in their country. They give reasons to justify these views.

Ask learners to find others with similar views and work as a group, if this is possible.

FOLLOW-UP

Learners share their mini-blogs, discuss them and consider whether to put them on-line.

They brainstorm other topics on which they think it is important for young people to have a say – in school, locally, nationally or internationally.

Learners consider whether any of these topics might be controversial. They explore the term 'controversial', think of more examples of controversial issues and consider how these are best handled in discussions.

Tell learners about possible sites they can use for this.

You may like to explore the Council of Europe manual: https://edoc.coe.int/en/human-rights-democratic-citizenship-and-interculturalism/7738-teaching-controversial-issues.html

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

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