



VOICE

Voicing children Opportunities Interaction
Collective decision making Education

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Title:

Supporting pre-service teachers' awareness of children's participation in decision making: an evaluation of the VOICE intervention in initial teacher education.

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Abstract

The need for a participatory early childhood education (ECE) has been emphasised as one of children's rights and supported by current learning and educational theories. However, pre-service teachers' positive stance towards children's participation in decision making is not taken for granted since prior research has shown that their beliefs of children as lacking abilities to participate act as obstacles for enhancing participatory ECE practices.

This paper presents the process and results of an intervention in initial teacher education (ITE) aiming to foster pre-service teachers' awareness of the need for and the ways to enhance children's participation in ECE. This intervention was based on the use of purposeful educational material produced within the program VOICE (Voicing children Opportunities Interaction Collective decision making Education) funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI). It involved a systematic engagement of pre-service teachers with theoretical, research and reflective tools related to children's participation during a semester course. The teacher educators from five different University departments of ECE in Greece collaborated to detect changes in pre-service teachers' knowledge about participatory practices after the intervention and their evaluations of the used material and teaching processes. 150 pre-service teachers took part in this research after their informed consent. Research tools included questionnaires administered to pre-service teachers at the beginning and end of their course as well as teacher educators' diaries and reflective meetings regarding the results of their interventions during their teaching.

The research is still in progress but preliminary findings show variations in the effects of the VOICE teacher intervention programme on student teachers' knowledge and thinking. Further analysis is needed to provide an explanatory framework for these variations. Evidence-based recommendations for the organisation and content of ITE will be provided after the presentation of results.