



# VOICE

Voicing children Opportunities  
Interaction Collective decision  
making Education

**The necessity and importance of  
children's participation  
in the daily educational process**



**H.F.R.I.**  
Hellenic Foundation for  
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THESSALONIKI

# What will we consider...

1.- Why should children be involved in the educational process?

2.

- How important and necessary is their participation?

- How is the necessity of children's participation documented?

# To understand the necessity of participation

we need to consider its association with ...

Modern perceptions of children's abilities and their role, as well as the role of the teacher in preschool education

The theories of learning about the way children approach and acquire new knowledge

The recognition of children's rights in the co-formation of the educational process

...and the connection and interaction between them.

# Documentation of participation

- Why should children be involved in the educational process?

Because even children have an opinion, have abilities and can take action (James & Prout, 1997).

Because children are considered active agents, they are also citizens who can shape their daily life with their actions (Lee, 2001; King, 2004; Sage, 2011; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998).

Because children can construct coherent meanings of the world that surrounds them, their knowledge of the world is different, but not inferior to that of adults (MacNaughton et al., 2008).

# Documentation of participation

- Why should children participate in the educational process?

Because children know things about the world and themselves that the teacher does not know (Wood, 1999).

Because young children want to express their opinions, they feel that we need to listen to them because they themselves can contribute to making decisions that concern them. They experience participation as an opportunity to prove that they possess ideas and opinions that they can negotiate with adults (Hart, 1997).

Because we want to “redeem democracy in early childhood education, allowing the child to exercise its powers in the situation in which experiential learning is developed (Formosinho & Formosinho, 2012, p. 25)

# Documentation of participation

- How important/necessary is their participation?  
- Why?

- What are the benefits of recognizing children's abilities?

# Documentation of participation

- How important/necessary is their participation? Why?
- What are the benefits of recognizing children's abilities?
- 

The participation of children on issues that concern them, offers new skills, enhances their self-esteem and is a challenge to the sense of weakness with which we associate childhood (Lansdown, 2001).

When children are treated as individuals capable of participating, their confidence and self-esteem are enhanced as they participate in new learning experiences and acquire skills that they would not acquire with conventional educational approaches (Fischer, 2006; Kirby & Bryson, 2002; Theobald et al., 2011).

# Documentation of participation

- How important/necessary is their participation? Why?
- What are the benefits of recognizing children's abilities?

Children realize that it is important to listen to others and adopt the same behaviors. Thus, learning is not a one-way street, from the teacher to the child, but collaborative and interactive as children can transmit new ideas from which adults can learn (MacNaughton et al., 2008).

The use of participatory processes in education enables adults to see the world through children's perspective and children to express and implement opinions and ideas (Gjems, 2009).



# Documentation of participation

- How important/necessary is their participation? Why?
- What are the benefits of recognizing children's abilities?

## The use of participatory processes in education:

- enables adults to enhance the participation of young children by actively listening to their views and providing them with the opportunities and scope to make decisions that concern them (MacNaughton et al., 2008).
- allows teachers to better meet children's needs, as long as their decisions are based on the real needs of children (Ackermann et al., 2003).

# Documentation of participation

-What is the basis of the need for children's participation?

# Documentation of participation

## 3. What is the basis of the need for children's participation?

### Principles on which the necessity of participation is based

- I. **Principle of safeguarding children's rights - Convention on the Rights of the Child - Recognition of children's rights in the co-formation of the educational process (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Government Gazette 192, 1992; Lansdown 1994).**
- II. **Κείμενα εκπαιδευτικής πολιτικής (UNICEF-UK/Save the Children, 1990 · OECD 2001 · Council of Europe, 2006· Dahlberg & Moss 2005)**
- III. **Theories and socio-cultural theories (Dewey 1956, 1966, 1982; Bruner 1973, 1985, 1986· Piaget, 1986· Gardner 1993· Vygotsky 1998· Rogoff, 2003).**

# The necessity of children's participation

A prerequisite for achieving children's participation is...



The recognition by teachers that children are capable of forming an opinion, taking initiatives and having the responsibility of their actions

**but also...**

# The necessity of children's participation

A prerequisite for achieving children's participation is...

The recognition by teachers that children are capable of forming an opinion, taking initiatives and having the responsibility of their actions

**But also...**

- ✓ Informing teachers about children's right to have their say heard
- ✓
- ✓ The willingness of teachers to create a pedagogical environment for utilizing children's participation where...

the learning context will enhance the active role of children in the construction of knowledge

pedagogical approaches and practices will be applied that support the meaningful participation of children

(Avgitidou 2014a, 2014b)

# Participation and ...

Recognition of children's rights in the co-formation of the educational process

## Questions raised:

- What do we mean by "right to participate"?

- How important is the right of children to participate actively in actions that concern them?

- How is the recognition of the right to participate in educational practice interpreted?

# Children's participation as a right

**Convention on the Rights of the Child  
(Greek Government Gazette 192, Issue One, 2/12/1992)**

## Article 12

**The child is granted the right to freely express his or her opinion on any matter that concerns him or her, taking into account the views of the child according to his or her age and degree of maturity.  
For this purpose, in particular, the child should be given the opportunity to be heard in any procedure that concerns him....**

<http://www.inart12.org/index.php/el/sample-sites-14/diethnis-symvasi-gia-ta-dikaiomata-tou-paidioy> (in Greek)

# Children's participation as a right

**UNICEF**

(UNICEF-UK/Save the Children,  
1990)



[UNICEF Children's Rights - YouTube](#)

The views and experiences of all children should be treated with equal respect regardless of their age, status, nationality, abilities or other factors.

Participation is ensured through the active involvement of children from the first years of their lives, in various actions in which children need to understand what is the work and process in which they are involved each time and what is their own role.



# Children's participation as a right

**Council of Europe**  
(Council of Europe, 2004 & 2006)

The participatory role of children and young people in co-management and co-decision actions of various programs at educational and Community level is important.

[Child participation \(coe.int\)](http://coe.int)

(Here you can find Council of Europe material on children's rights)

# Children's participation as a right

**Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
(OECD, 2001)**

**The need for children's participation, respect for their subjectivity and natural ways of learning as indicators of the quality of pre-school education.**

# Children's participation as a right

Clarifications...

- Are all children able to express an opinion? For any topic?



There is no minimum age required for exercising the right to participate. Participation concerns any child who has an opinion on a topic that concerns him. Even very young children can be encouraged in a variety of ways to express what they want (e.g. through painting).



What I liked and what I didn't like about school

Source: Einarsdottir, J., Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2009). Making meaning: Children's perspectives expressed through drawings. *Early child development and care*, 179(2), 217-232.

# Children's participation as a right

Clarifications...

- How do adults recognize the right of children to express opinions?

For children to express their views, it is necessary for adults to create appropriate opportunities, to ensure that children can and should be encouraged to express their views on all relevant issues. This does not mean that there will be a requirement for children to express their opinions if they are not willing or uninterested in doing so. It is not enough to give children the right to be heard without taking seriously what they have to say. Particular attention should be paid to the views of children and children should be informed of the decisions made for themselves.

# Pedagogical perspective and participation

Children are perceived as capable to lead their own learning.

Learning potential is enhanced through children's active participation in co-operative processes.

Children participate in learning environments in which their perspectives are respected.

Participation means more than taking part in...or following instructions...



[School factory - YouTube](#)

# Participation and ...

Theories of learning about the way children approach and master new knowledge

**Questions raised:**

- What is the relationship between participation and learning?

- What is the role of children's participation in learning?

# The participation of children as a learning context

## Dewey

No passive transmission of knowledge. Learning means experience, action, exchange of views, interaction.

(Dewey 1956, 1966, 1982)

## Bruner

Active participation for the discovery of knowledge by the children themselves and support

(Bruner 1973, 1985, 1986)

## Piaget

Learning: building schemas and meanings through interaction with objects and people and exploration, through confronting beliefs and ideas with peers, through solving problems

(Piaget, 1986)

## Gardner

Multiple intelligence theory: different ways of engagement maximize children's ability to participate

(Gardner 1993)

## Vygotsky

Participation: support appropriate to developmental level within the zone of proximal development – intersubjectivity  
- importance of social and cultural context and interactions within it

(Vygotsky 1998)

## Rogoff

Learning through participation – guided participation

(Rogoff 2003)

# Summing up on the necessity of participation

1

Recognition of children's abilities

2

Inalienable right of children

3

An important prerequisite for learning



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