

VOICE

Voicing children Opportunities
Interaction Collective decision
making Education

The meaning and type of children's participation in the daily educational process



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Key questions for the meaning of children's participation

- ▶ What does it mean to involve children in kindergarten?
- ▶ What processes does the concept of participation involve?
- ▶ What does the term "participation" & "participation in education" denote?
- ▶ How do our perceptions of our role, children and the learning process influence our participatory practices?
- ▶ What are the conditions for the participation of children?
- ▶ What forms can children's participation take and how are the different level of these forms of participation?

- What does it mean to involve children in kindergarten?

In terms of classroom climate

The children participate because I generally notice that...

1. they are consistent, kind to other children, do not create problems

2. take initiatives in a variety of actions

3. propose solutions and make decisions

4. express their views and preferences

5. they are happy with everything we do in class

6. adhere to the rules of order

7. follow the program and respond to all activities

8. have good relations with each other, make friends, do not quarrel

9. pay attention to issues that interest them

10. interact with each other and discover knowledge

Which of the above practices are participatory? Why?

What does children's participation in ECE mean?

As to specific actions

The children participate because I notice in particular that they...

1. respond to the dialogue in the group by raising their hand to talk

2. listen to their classmates and have their say

3. choose games and teammates

4. jointly take decisions and take action

5. talk about their experiences and express their opinions

6. they all take part in the motor activities in turn and play group games following the instructions

7. complete the tasks I assign to them

8. they are happy to paint and make constructions

9. they deal with something that interests them

10. when I give them the floor they talk and say things about themselves

How and to what extent do these practices relate to participation?

Participation and

Perceptions of children's abilities, their role and the role of the teacher, the aim of the educational process and the purpose of early childhood education

Questions raised:

- What abilities do we recognize in preschoolers?

- What more do you think children can do than the actions we observed in the previous examples?

- What do these assumptions mean about the role of teachers and children in organizing, implementing and evaluating the educational process?

Looking at certain beliefs...

- How much do you agree with them?

1. "The developmental level of children does not allow them to take actions and responsibilities"

2. "The teacher must transfer knowledge and teach behaviors to this sensitive age group of children"

3. "Young children cannot express opinions and take initiatives because they are immature and need guidance"

4. "The teacher is the main responsible for the content of the activities she/he organizes, children cannot have a say in this"

5. "The program must have a specific structure that children must follow faithfully for the smooth operation of the kindergarten"

(Alexiou, 2018)

What do we agree on and what are we differentiated from the description of the participation of children in the following 4 axes?

Ways of children's participation - abilities

- Response
- Understanding
- Interest
- Attention
- Interaction
- Expression of experiences-ideas
- Pleasure-joy
-

Teacher's attitude towards children - relationships

- Utilizes children's interests
- Organizes the educational process
- She/he is satisfied with the response of the children
-

Type of learning process

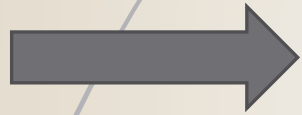
Children learn when they are interested, when they pay attention, when they repeat what they hear carefully, when they do what we tell them .

Conditions for children's participation

Interest, joy, attention are a prerequisite for participation.



**The term
"participation"**



Participation is defined as a process where a person takes part in an activity or in particular in decision-making where he/she is given the opportunity to express himself, to have his opinion heard and to pay the necessary attention to his views and interests.

(Thomas, 2007· Krappmann, 2010)

Participation in education

- ▶ Children express their opinion, take part in collective decision making (i.e. for space organization, for the program etc.) and co-shape the aims, content and process of the learning process (Hart, 1992 Treseder, 1997).
- ▶ Learning is described as involvement in processes of collective construction of meaning and therefore focuses on children's potentialities and processes within which teachers listen to, respond and include children's perspectives in their final decisions (Papandreou, 2020).

Participation

a team collaboration platform

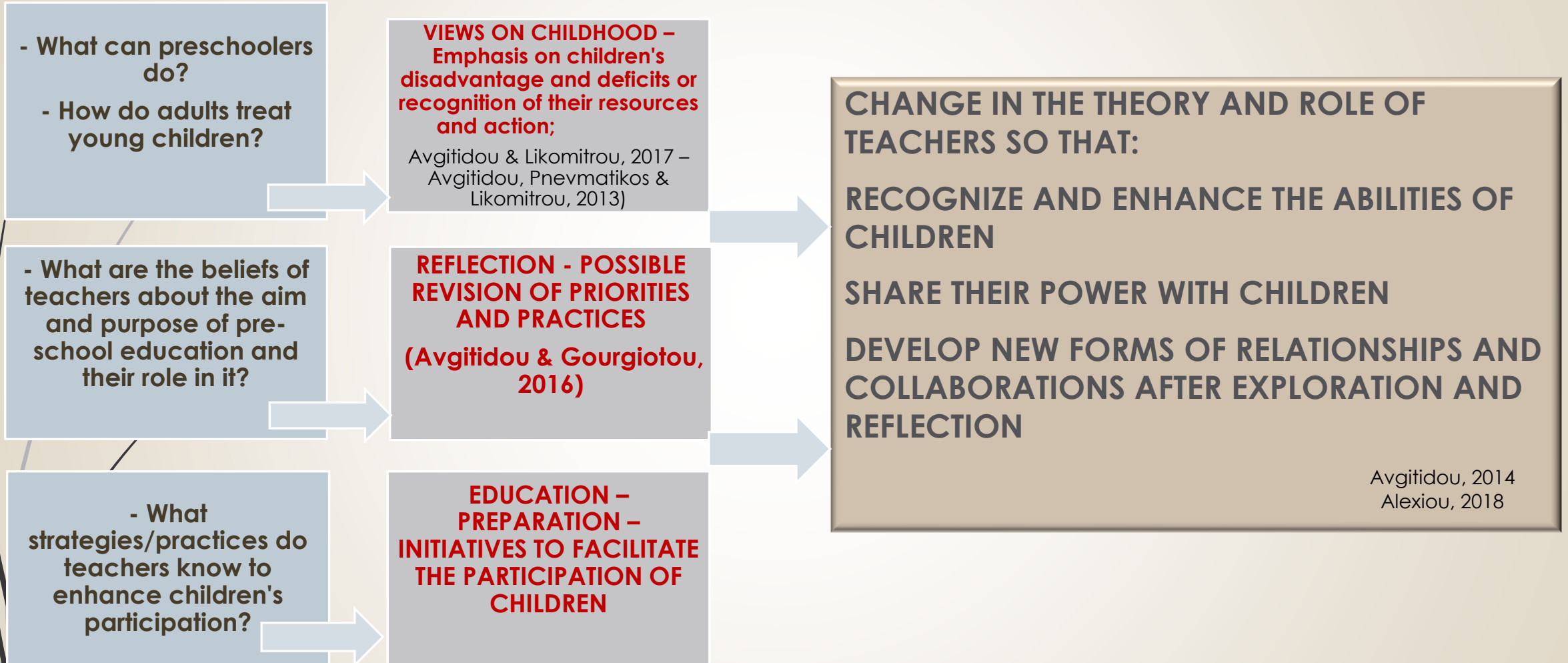
where its members

- Communicate
- Interact
- Express opinions
- Suggest ideas
- Solve problems
- Make decisions
- Take actions
- Evaluate their actions
-

(Stratigea, 2015· Rein & Schoen, 1993)

- **How is this collaboration platform interpreted in kindergarten?**
- **How feasible is it and why?**

Summarizing the conditions for enhancing children's participation



Presuppositions for children's participation. As a teacher...

- I learn about the children of my class – I can recognise their interests, know their experiences and take them into consideration on the organisation of the learning process
- I create relationships with children based on dialogue and the principles of democracy
- I draw from children's knowledge, interests and ideas for solving problems or developing an action or shaping the learning process
- I trust children's abilities and potentialities and I provide them with opportunities and a scope of initiatives based on negotiation, co-operation and research.

Levels of participation

Participation receives multiple meanings depending on the scope for participation provided by the teacher to the children.

This highlights ways and levels of participation that are depicted on scales and presented as "models of participation".

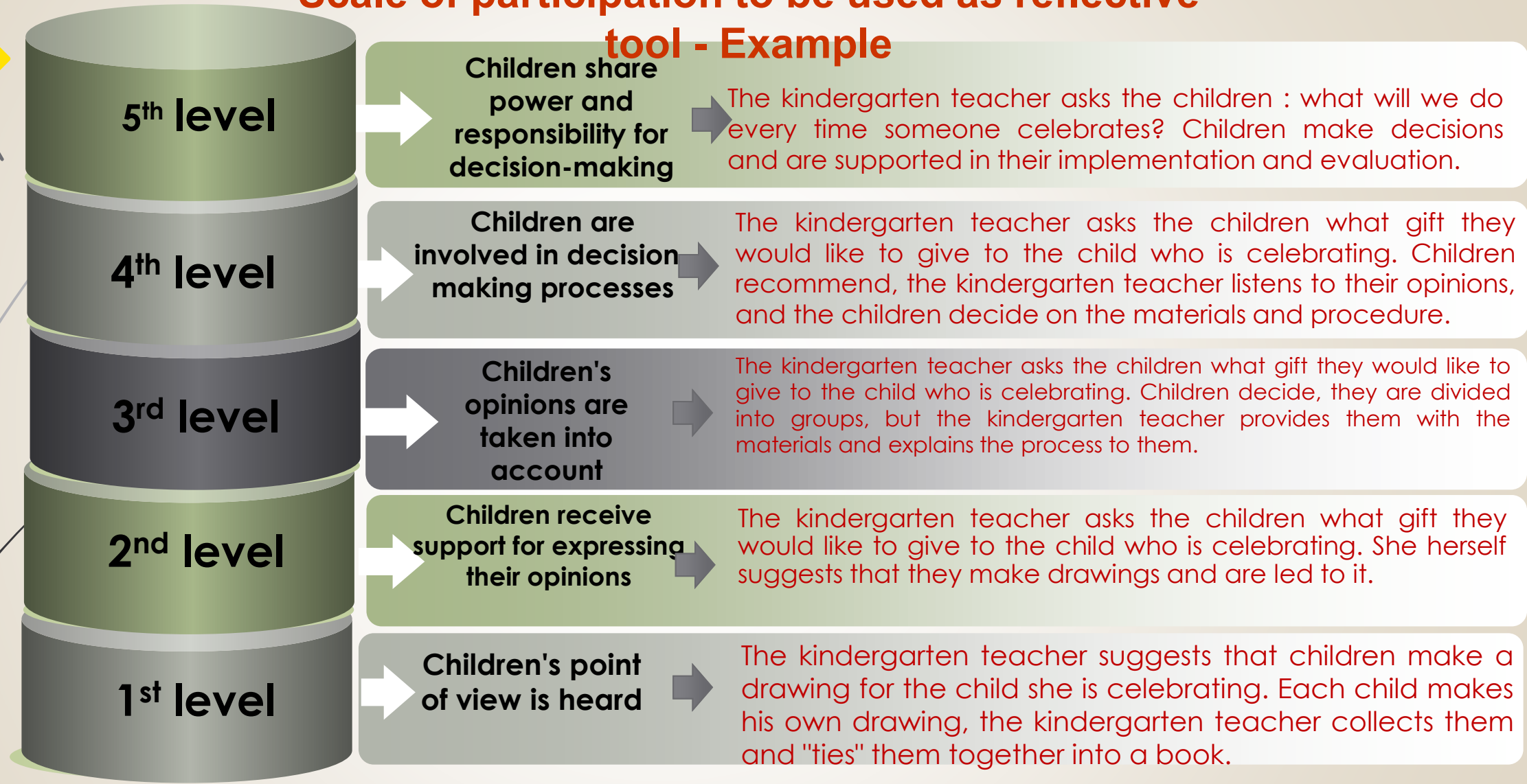
The distinguishing difference between the ways or levels of participation on each scale is determined by the degree of authority shared or transferred each time by the teacher to the children involved.

(Franklin & Sloper, 2005).

Scale of participation to be used as reflective tool - Example

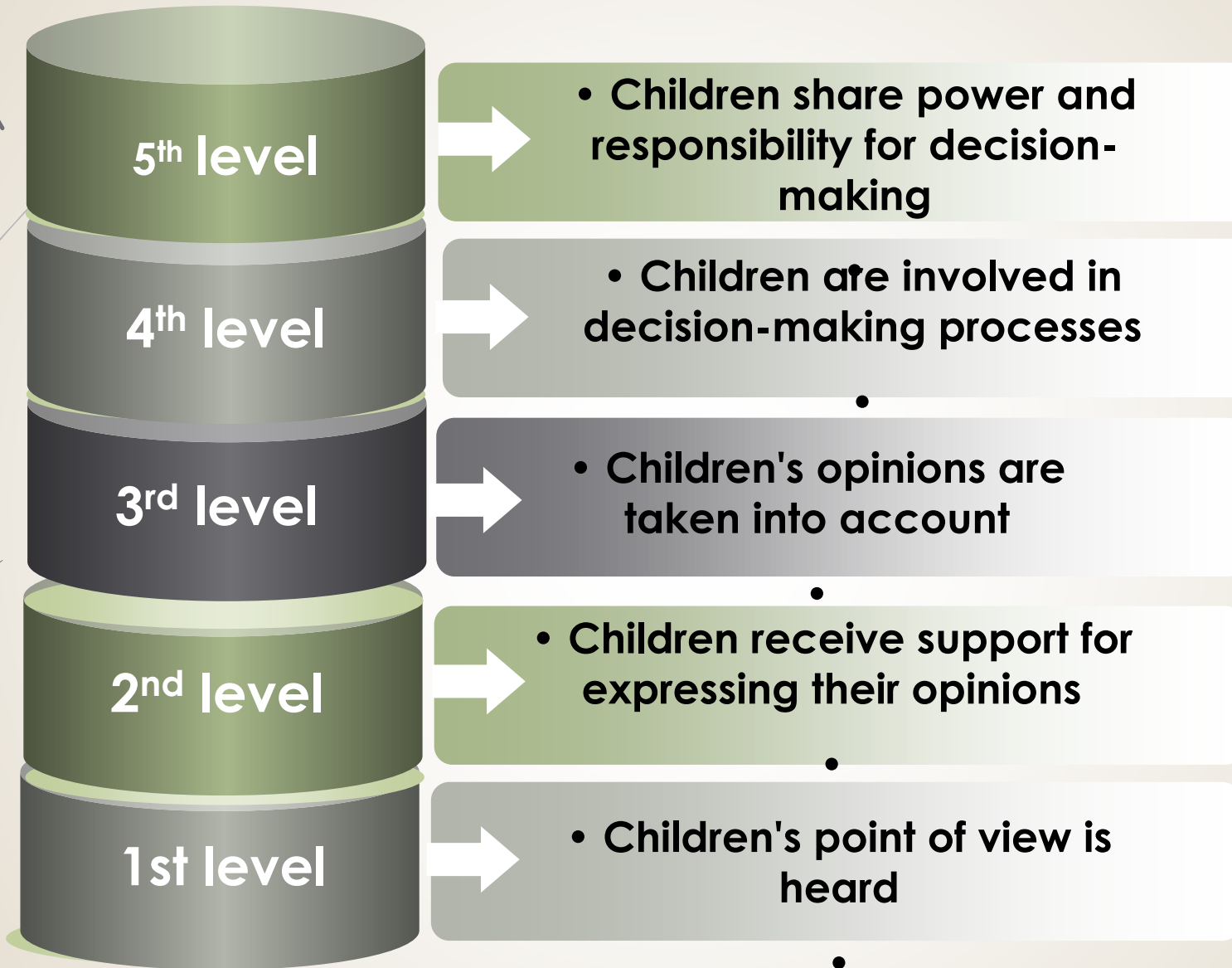
Scale of participation levels

Shier, H. (2001)



Scale of participation

Scale of participation levels
Shier, H. (2001)

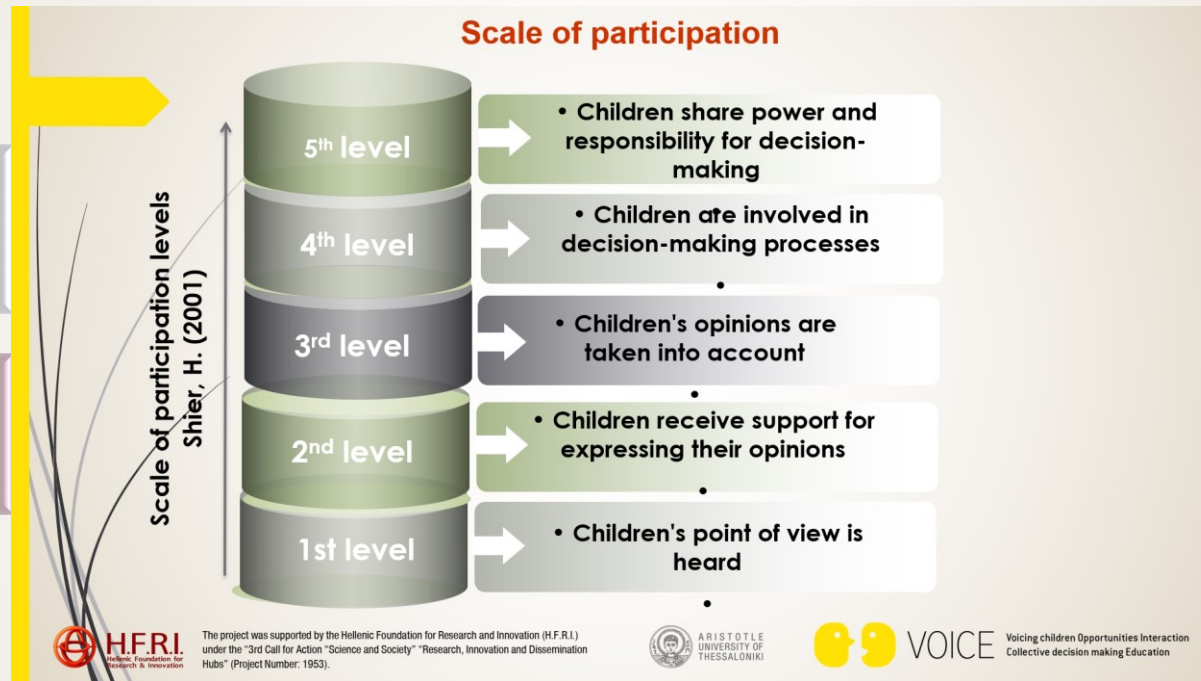


What do we observe on the scale about the role of children?

- children moving from one stage to another
- gain greater control over their actions,
- take on more responsibilities;
- their competences are recognized & supported

At what level of participation would you classify the following children's actions according to the scale? Use the previous slide to relate the different numbers to the 5 levels of Shier's participation scale.

participation scale.



1. Interact with each other and discover knowledge

2. They respond to my questions and the stimuli I give them

3. They are happy to paint and make constructions

4. They deal with something that interests them

5. Complete the tasks I assign to them

6. They take initiatives in a variety of actions

7. When I give them the floor they talk and say things about themselves

8. Propose solutions and make decisions

9. Choose games and teammates

10. Plan, implement and evaluate their decisions

11. They listen to their classmates and say their opinion or preferences

WARNING! What should we pay attention to in order to integrate an action of children on some level...

- Is it indeed participatory action, for example, when ...

1. do the children complete the tasks I assign to them?

2. children have no involvement in the selection of assignments;

3. Does the kindergarten teacher give the floor to children to talk and say things about themselves?

4. the kindergarten teacher decides when to give the floor to the children;

total control – strict guidance

NON-PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES



WARNING! What should we pay attention to in order to integrate an action of children on some level...

- What exactly is the framework of the action that children participate in?

1. All children take part in motor activities in turn and play group games following the instructions

2. They are happy to paint and make constructions

REGARDING 1 AND 2

Do children have a say and a choice in the actions? What are the selection criteria and the procedure for their organization?

3. They take initiatives in a variety of actions

REGARDING 3

What kind of initiatives? Which children? Are the most "popular"?

FICTITIOUS OR DECORATIVE PARTICIPATION?

Exercise proposed for design of children's participation and reflection based on this presentation:

DESIGN OF ACTIONS

As teachers you want to design your actions concerning either:
the creation of classroom rules with the children
or
the shaping of a new play area or a re-formation of an existing play area.

After making a draft design of your actions try to reflect which of the processes and actions you have designed encourage children's participation and what kind of participation do they foster.

-REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS BASED ON YOUR DESIGN OF ACTION

HOW DO YOUR ACTIONS:

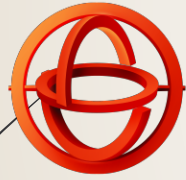
- Allow you to listen to children?
- Encourage and make easy for children to express their views?
- Include expressed children's views or ideas?
- Support children's initiatives?
- Support children in planning their thoughts and ideas into action?
- Support children in putting their design into action?
- Support children to evaluate and reflect upon their actions and suggest new ways of action ?

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