ELEMENTS THAT CAN ENCOURAGE CHILD PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL

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Content

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- Learning from children’s voices in schools
Understanding child participation in school

The ultimate purpose of education – support development and empower children for active civic engagement

Meta concept that encompasses a sense of belonging, participation at behaviour level, efficacy and dedication to school

Mainstream research topic related to children context

Multiple benefits of participation for children, teachers, school, community

(Mis)Understanding child participation

I HAVE RIGHTS

ME TOO
Active participation in school means... 

To give and share information, to be asked and consulted on things related to life in the classroom and school, to actively participate in teaching and non-teaching activities and decisions that are important for students, to propose and realize child ideas and projects, all with support and respect of adults and peers in accordance with child own interests and possibilities.
Context of main research

- **Child participation in the Education System**
- Conducted by the **Office of Ombudsman for Children of the Republic of Croatia** in collaboration with Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Zagreb
- **The aim was to gain a better understanding of child participation at school from the perspectives of students, teachers and other education professionals**
- Qualitative and quantitative approaches
- From September 2017 to June 2018
Methodology

QUALITATIVE PART

◦ Used in first exploratory phase of the study
◦ 12 focus groups
◦ 70 students from four main Croatian regions (Osijek, Zagreb, Rijeka, Split)
◦ Qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis

QUANTITATIVE PART

◦ Total of 2720 students from elementary and secondary schools, all regions in Croatia
◦ 54.7% girls and 45% boys
◦ Questionnaire Participation in school, created after qualitative phase
◦ Descriptive statistics
Results

Most ranked elements that can encourage participation...

- Use of modern technology: 45.0%
- Adult readiness for students ideas: 36.5%
- If they notice that suggestions have been respected: 50.6%
- Teachers interest to seek feedback from students: 43.5%
- Encouraging students: 50.4%
- Award those who participate: 53.9%
- Better physical environment: 53.5%
- Relaxing the learning outcomes and obligations: 62.1%
- Making participation more fun: 63.5%

- No significant differences regarding to gender or age
- Students from high school give more importance to awards
- Students from elementary school give more importance to teacher’s encouragement
- All elements relatively high ranked
Elements that can encourage child participation

- Good relationships in school
- Child-friendly participation
- School’s physical environment
Importance of good relationships between students and teachers

- Children need interested, caring, dedicated, open, honest and consistent adults
- Adults are extremely important to children when it comes to participating in school
- Fear as an aspect of the relationship between children and adults
- Need for support and feedback
- For participation, support of adults is more important than peer support (t=-2.954; $p<.005$)
Child-friendly school participation

For 63.5% children it is important that participation is fun, more child-friendly.

Working in groups, collaborative learning and using modern technology are highly valued.

Need for relaxing the forms of learning outcomes and student’s obligations.
Importance of physical environment

- Children give big importance to school physical environment for their active participation
- 75.5% children rank physical environment as important of most important element
- More classes outside the classroom, in nature
- Informal time with adults
- Areas for free and informal time with peers
Learning from children’s voices in schools

Relationship between students and teachers is one of the key elements that encourages students participation (Skinner, Pitzer, 2012; Split, Koomen, Thijs, 2011; Steward, 2007)

All elements are highly rated which is important information for creating strategies to increase participation

Need for education about participatory rights and interpersonal relationships for professionals in school

Design and organization of physical environment can contribute to higher participation
Listening to children's voices from the classroom to the education policy

- There is no child participation without children
- Participation as a part of school culture
- Methodological limitations and future research

Why is participation important to us? Is it really important, is it the value and goal for us or is something imposed?
Thank you for your attention and participation! 😊

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