

# Young children's right to be heard on the quality of their education: Addressing potential misunderstandings in the context of early childhood education <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Lundy, L., Murray, C., Smith, K., & Ward, C.

**Source:** British Educational Research Journal

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 17 Jan 2024

## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Abstract

In early childhood education many researchers and professionals across the world have embraced the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's requirement to include young children in decision-making. In the context of ongoing discussion about young children's capacity to share their views and opinions about matters affecting them, there is often a focus on demonstrating 'evidence' that young children can participate in decision-making as capable meaning-makers in their own lives, defying traditional paternalistic approaches and assumptions. While acknowledging the important work that has been undertaken to support children's participatory rights, this article seeks to raise questions about whether understanding the right of young children to be heard, particularly in relation to the quality of their education, may have been subject to a form of 'rights inflation' that has extended the scope of the application of the right beyond the parameters of the legal framework and/or promoted an interpretation which exceeds what the text of the Convention can bear. In this article, we explore three possible misrepresentations relating to young children's participation in decision-making related to the quality of education: (1) that all children can, should and want to have opportunities to share views on all matters affecting them; (2) that young children should always be allowed to learn and play freely; and (3) that children are the experts in their worlds. We do this to open up a conversation about the limits and partiality of young children's participation when viewed through the lens of children's human rights, highlighting, *inter alia*, the ongoing need to underscore the role of parents/guardians and professionals in enabling young children to enjoy all of their human rights, including the right to a quality education, fully.

**Related link:** Can you hear me? The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them <sup>[3]</sup>

Children's rights in education: International perspectives <sup>[4]</sup>

**Region:** Europe <sup>[5]</sup>

**Tags:** children's rights <sup>[6]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 1 Feb 2024):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/24/01/young-childrens-right-be-heard-quality-their-education>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/24/01/young-childrens-right-be-heard-quality-their-education> [2] <https://bera-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/berj.3968> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/08/02/can-you-hear-me-right-young-children-participate-decisions> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/17/10/childrens-rights-education-international-perspectives> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/childrens-rights>