

Can you hear me? The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them ^[1]

Working Papers in Early Childhood Development

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AVAILABILITY

- Full report in pdf ^[2]
- Ordering information ^[3]

Description:

This report emphasizes that participation enhances children's self-esteem and confidence, promotes their overall capacities, produces better outcomes, strengthens understanding of and commitment to democratic processes and protects children more effectively. Participation provides opportunity for developing a sense of autonomy, independence, heightened social competence and resilience. The benefits are therefore significant, and adults with both direct and indirect responsibility for children need to acquire a greater humility in recognizing that they have a great deal to learn from children. But the case for listening to young children goes beyond the beneficial outcomes. It also has a matter of social justice and human rights. All people, however young, are entitled to be participants in their own lives, to influence what happens to them, to be involved in creating their own environments, to exercise choices and to have their views respected and valued.

Creating environments where these entitlements are fulfilled for young children will necessitate profound change. In most countries throughout the world, there is a continued perception of young children as passive recipients of care and protection. Their capacities for participation are underestimated, their agency in their own lives is denied and the value of involving them is unrecognized. Yet there is a growing and persuasive body of evidence to challenge these barriers.

See chapter 2: The case for participation including Promoting children's development and Strengthening democracy; and chapter 5: Opportunities for the participation of young children in early years settings on page 19.

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