

**THE NATURE OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL
SETTING IN KABAROLE DISTRICT, UGANDA**

By

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ABSTRACT

Using Roger Hart's Ladder (RHL) as the model of participation as an evaluation technique, this study sought to explore and describe the nature of children's participation in the school setting in Kabarole district. It drew from article 12 of the UNCRC and aimed to situate the nature of participation of children within the context of the school. The intention was to assess and ascertain whether CP in schools is up to the standards envisioned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The specific objectives were to, identify and describe the school activities where children have been involved, understand the opinions/perceptions and experiences of the pupils and teachers on the subject of CP in the school, identify the measures by school management in creating an enabling environment to ensure that children genuinely participate in the school and to examine measures by school management to maximize opportunities and tackle challenges of having CP in the school.

The study used a descriptive research design that utilized both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect and analyze data. Information was sought from pupils in upper primary (5 to 7), their teachers and head teachers. Pupils were selected using simple random sampling and purposive selection for teachers was used. The total population of pupils (N) was 1217 from which a sample of 248 was drawn. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data. Content analysis of qualitative data was done on selected full text responses to open ended questions and on data from FGDs.

The study established that respondents were knowledgeable about CP and agreed almost unanimously that children do participate in school activities. Findings also indicate that the opinions/perceptions of the respondents were fairly agreeable to CP although the determinant of the child's best interest and proper age for starting to participate were controversial. There were also measures put in place by management to both facilitate CP, and also, to maximise opportunities and tackle challenges of CP in the school.

However, the study also revealed that CP in schools was characterized by manipulation, decoration and tokenism as the dominant levels of participation. The implication of this nature of CP is that it does not recognize children's capacities; neither respects their views nor values their contributions as social actors. This discourages them from being active in society, undermines their self-confidence and stifles their development.

It is therefore recommended that meaningful and quality CP in schools is promoted through sensitization of all stakeholders, support from teachers/parents, networking between the schools, budgeting for CP, improving on the spaces for participation, incorporating children's views in the CP guideline to create a popular version, tapping community support where the children stay and evaluating CP, among others.