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● Educational ladder of  
● student participation

Tool on Student Voice

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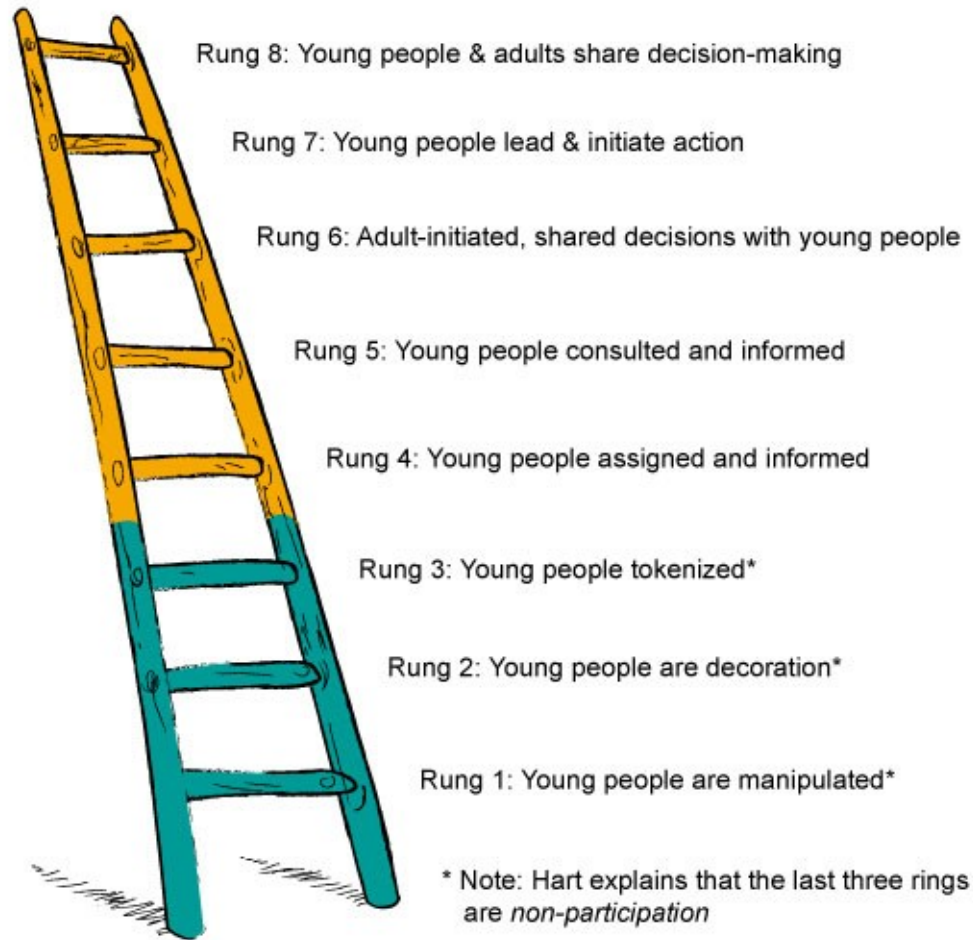


Student Voice  
the BRIDGE to Learning

Tool	Educational ladder of student participation
Aim/Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To determine the current level of student participation in educational activities.</li> <li>- To create awareness on the desired level of student participation.</li> </ul>
Short instruction	The teacher uses the tool as a way of assessing the current and desired level of student participation in education. The tool provides information on the level of direct involvement by students on the decision-making process, specifically on curriculum issues. The tool is based on the ladder of youth participation (Hart, 1992), which was originally meant for creating awareness in general decision-making processes.
Time duration	Estimation about 45 minutes, which includes: 20 minutes for the individual assignment, 10 minutes for the group discussion and 15 minutes for the preparation of a plan.
Needed materials	<p>Worksheet 'Where do students stand on the education participation ladder (appendix 1)</p> <p>Worksheet 'The Educational Ladder (appendix 2)</p>
Role teacher	Initiator
Role student	Participant
Adapted from	<p>Otter, den M. (2015). <i>Voicing: geef leerlingen een stem. 9 Aanraders</i>. Dordrecht: InStonDo.</p> <p>Hart, R. (1992). <i>Children`s participation from tokenism to citizenship</i>. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.</p>
References	<p>Thomson, P. (2011). Coming to terms with 'voice'. In Czerniawski, G., Kidd, W. (Eds.), <i>The student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide</i>. Bingley: Emerald Group.</p> <p>Cook-Sather, A. (2006). Sound, presence and power: Student voice in educational research and reform. <i>Curriculum inquiry</i>, 36(4), 359-390.</p>

### Context

Roger Hart (1992) developed a ladder of young people`s participation. The ladders consists of eight steps, implying a certain level of participation in decision-making. The ladder starts with a minimal engagement of students in decision-making, moving upwards towards a greater influence. And ranges from non-participation to full participation of students in the process of decision-making.



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Marianne den Otter (2015) used this ladder of youth participation as input for the development of an educational tool on participation, to be used by teachers. The purpose of this so-called educational ladder of student participation is therefore to determine the level of student participation in education. The eight steps of the ladder of Roger Hart are combined with the following educational activities: educational content, pedagogy, school and social events and physical aspects of the school. Each of these activities will be assessed by teachers concerning the extent to which students are allowed to talk about educational issues and have the possibility, freedom and autonomy to influence them (student voice).

"Student voice" is defined as a right for learners to express opinions, access people who influence decisions and exercise active participation in educational decision-making processes (Thomson, 2011). The concept is related to encourage democracy in action and empower students to have a voice in their education. Students have a unique perspective on learning, teaching and schooling; that their insights justifies not only the attention but also the responses of adults; and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education (Cook-Sather, 2006: 359-360)". The central aspects of student voice are therefore "sound, presence and power", indicating that students have a voice in the sense that they can speak up and share their thoughts, opinions and experiences. The students are given a platform to speak up from and to be heard to and that they actually can change their situation, possessing an active role in decision-making.

### Summary of the tool

The tool consists of a worksheet that enables teachers to assess the current and desired level of student participation in education. The teacher fills in the worksheet (appendix 1) indicating the relevant level of student participation combined with a specific educational activity (step 1). The activities are related to educational content, pedagogy, school and social events or physical aspects of the school. The important question to answer is: what is the current level of student participation in which students are allowed to talk about their education and enables them to influence the educational activities? This is followed by filling in the same worksheet again, but then from the perspective of the desired situation: what is the ideal level of student participation? The results of the current and desired situation can be transferred to the educational ladder using the worksheet (appendix 2). Put the 'x' and the 'o' that was filled in in appendix 1, on the corresponding rung of the ladder. Write on the right side of the corresponding rung the relevant educational activity it refers to. This provides input for the group discussion that follows (step 2): the results of the current and desired situation of the different teachers are compared, analyzed and subsequently used as input to develop a plan of improvement (step 3).

Table 1 outlines the different steps to be taken. The process the teachers go through develops their awareness on student participation at classroom and school level. The underlying question is: where does the learner stand on the ladder of participation and what does the teacher (or school) strive for?

Table 1 *Steps in identifying the level of student participation in education*

Steps	Activity
1. Individual assignment	assess the current situation of student participation and formulate the desired situation of student participation
2. Group assignment	analyse and compare the results
3. Development assignment	formulate a plan with suggestions for improvement of student participation in education

## Appendix 1: Worksheet 'Where do students stand on the educational participation ladder?'

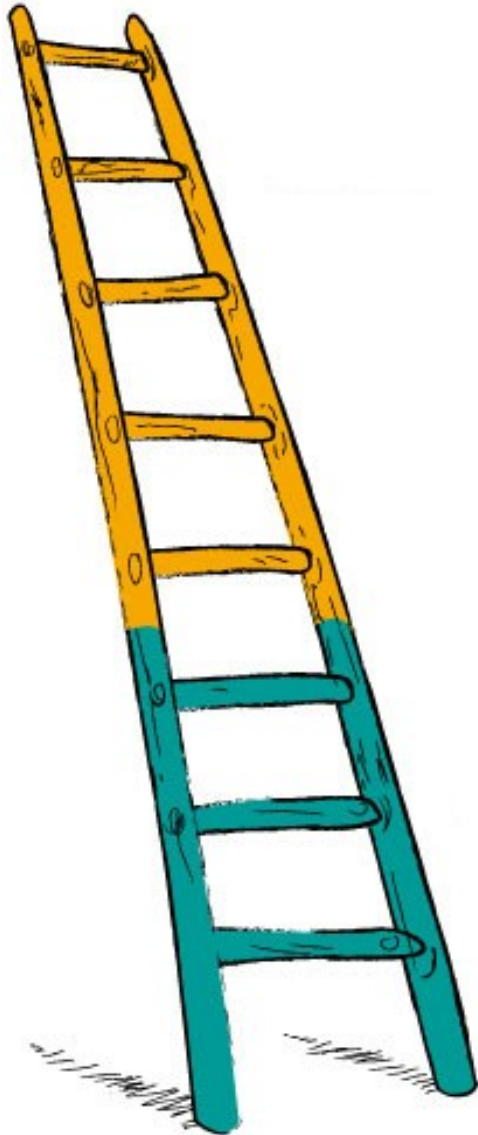
Fill in: 1. put first an 'x' in the relevant steps/level of the participation ladder

2. then put an 'o' stating the desired situation of student participation in educational activities

	Rung 1: Manipulation	Rung 2: Decoration	Rung 3: Marionettes	Rung 4: Assigned & informed	Rung 5: Consultation	Rung 6: Adult- initiated, shared decisions	Rung 7: Young- initiated	Rung 8: Shared decision-making
<b>Level of student participation in education</b>	learners are shaped by others	learners follow choices made by others	learners play the role formulated by others	learners carry out assigned tasks and provide information when asked for	learners are informed, heard and consulted	teachers take the initiative, but the decisions are jointly made	learners take the initiative, and are in the lead, the decisions are jointly made	learners and teachers take joint decisions
Educational content: • learning goals and topics								
Pedagogy: • type of assignments, schedule, planning								
Physical aspects: • playground equipment, decoration								
School and social events: • field trips, school & class rules, budget								
Satisfaction and well being of students								
How do you know? Explain why you put 'x' and 'o' in that particular row								

## Appendix 2: Worksheet 'The educational ladder'

- Put the 'x' and the 'o' that was filled in in appendix 1, on the corresponding rung of the ladder.
- Write also the relevant educational activity it refers to. Discuss the outcomes.



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