



Complementarity between the Right to Participation and the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression in the Teaching-Learning Process

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Abstract

This article examines the complementarity between the right to participation and the right to freedom of opinion and expression within the teaching-learning process. Grounded in international and regional legal frameworks, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the study adopts documentary and exegetical methods to analyze how these rights interact in educational settings. Findings reveal that meaningful student participation enhances the effective exercise of opinion and expression, fostering confidence, critical thinking, and responsibility. The discussion highlights that learner-centered pedagogy depends on active student engagement through self-expression. Ultimately, the article demonstrates that participation and freedom of expression are mutually reinforcing rights essential for improving learning outcomes and promoting democratic values in education.

Subject Areas

Sociology

Keywords

Child Expression, Right to Participation, Right to Opinion, Children's Rights, Burundi, Right to Education

1. Introduction

The teaching-learning process involves two main players, the teacher and the learner, and must be learner-centered when well designed. Thus, his participation in this process involves his self-expression, through which he expresses his own opinions, given that he should not be considered as a miniature adult, but rather should play an active role. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to show the complementarity that must exist between a student's right to participate in class and his or her right to freedom of opinion and expression, for successful learning on the part of the learner [1] [2]. To achieve this, we will first elucidate the notion of the teaching-learning process, that of the right to participation, and that of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, to finally show how the two types of rights complement each other to bring the teaching-learning process to a successful conclusion.

According to the LAROUSSE dictionary, a process is an ordered sequence of facts or phenomena following a certain pattern and leading to something. It's a continuous series of operations or actions that make up the way something is done or produced, or the way someone or a group behaves, with a view to achieving a particular result in line with a precise pattern.

As the term is multi-dimensional, it has other recognized meanings. For example, according to the standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), a process is defined as "a set of interrelated or interactive activities that transform inputs into outputs" [3]. The input elements correspond to the course of the process, while the output elements designate the results. In other words, it's the set of activities that enable a structure to deploy resources to produce a defined result [4] [5]. In the field of educational science, a process is a pathway from transmission to acquisition of knowledge, involving the teacher in the transmission of knowledge and the student in the acquisition of knowledge. However, each plays an active role in this process. Indeed, the teacher should not see himself as the dispenser of knowledge, nor should the student be regarded as an object to be shaped.

In concrete terms, teaching can no longer be conceived solely as the transmission of knowledge, since greater emphasis needs to be placed on the methodological means provided to learners to construct their own knowledge. This process is an organized attempt to mediate between the learning object and the learner, in a guided classroom relationship [2] [6]. In other words, teaching is the action of transmitting knowledge, and learning is the conscious, voluntary and observable process in which a learner engages, with the aim of appropriating. In principle,

teaching should be explicit and organized in three stages. In the first stage, called modeling, the teacher's presentations and demonstrations are designed to make explicit any reasoning that is implicit, by teaching the whys, hows, whens and wheres of doing; in the second stage, called guided practice, the teacher takes the time to check what the students have understood from the presentation or demonstration, by giving them tasks to carry out in teams, similar to those carried out in the modeling stage; and finally, in the third stage, called independent practice, the students reinvest what they have understood from modeling and applied in guided practice, in a few problems or questions.

In the learning process, there are three acquisition phases. The first is the acquisition phase, which essentially represents the path taken by any information from its perception by sensory memory to its comprehension or representation in short-term memory. The second is the retention phase, which aims to create a memory trace of learning in long-term memory, during which the knowledge, skills and know-how to be retained are formally identified and linked to the knowledge previously stored in long-term memory, in the form of semantic networks and schemas. The third and last is the transfer phase, which is the ability to use what has been learned from a simple context to a more complex one (vertical transfer) or to generalize what has been learned in an initial context to new contexts (horizontal transfer).

In short, the teaching-learning process is defined as the interaction between the teacher and the learner, within a curriculum-based teaching process based on needs identified through assessment and made possible by teacher training [7]-[10]. It's easy to understand that the teaching-learning process can be conceived as a systematic, sequential and planned course of action on the part of the teacher and learner to achieve teaching and learning outcomes.

2. Methods and Methodology

Throughout this research, we deployed techniques and methods.

2.1. Techniques

This study used documentary techniques to inquire what are the ways through which children's participation in the context of school life and especially in the classroom develops their leadership. Afterwards, the study analyzes the coherence between the children's participation at school, the implementation of the right to deliver the opinion and his participation. This is also surveyed in compliance with children's rights international and regional treaties, especially the UN system Convention on the rights of the child and African Union considers the child's right to participation and the context in which students intervene or participate in school life.

2.2. Methods

This study is a result of the exegetical method which consists of searching for the

meaning and the inmost sense that the author wanted in the text describing or providing children's participation in school life. The casuistic method has been used with a deductive approach viewing children's participation and its fruit which is spread to the case of school children's participation contribution in the formation of the future human being leadership.

3. Results

In wholesome, teaching must be concentrated on the child's participation, letting him give his opinion and rejoicing his right to freedom of expression.

Participation refers to the right of an individual, particularly a child, to be actively involved in decisions, processes, and activities affecting their life, directly or through representatives. It includes the right to be heard and to have one's views taken into account according to age and maturity. This right is recognized under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which guarantees the child's right to express views freely in all matters affecting them and to have those views given due weight.

Freedom of opinion is the right of every person to hold personal beliefs, thoughts, convictions, or viewpoints without interference, coercion, or punishment. This freedom protects the internal dimension of thought and conscience. It is guaranteed under Article 19(1) of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which states that everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

Freedom of expression refers to the right to seek, receive, and impart information, ideas, and opinions through any medium, including speech, writing, art, media, or digital communication. This freedom may be subject to lawful limitations necessary for respecting the rights of others, public order, or national security. It is protected under Article 19(2) of the ICCPR and Article 13 of the CRC, which recognize the right of children and adults alike to express themselves freely through various forms of communication.

Ensuring adequate participation of children contributes significantly to the realization of their right to express opinions. When children are meaningfully involved in decisions affecting them, they develop confidence, communication skills, and a sense of responsibility. This inclusive approach not only respects their dignity but also strengthens democratic values within schools, families, and communities, promoting more responsive and equitable outcomes for all stakeholders [11]. This is accepted in every domain of life, even in judiciary [12]-[14].

4. Discussion

4.1. The Right to Participation

Every human being has the right to participate in everything connected with his or her well-being. In the context of our work, we place particular emphasis on the right of every student to express his or her views and opinions on everything related to the teaching-learning process and, by extension, to the preparation of

a better future.

Certainly, in general terms, this kind of participation should be seen as the opportunity children and young people have to think, believe and express their opinions freely, with respect for others. In this way, adults are there to listen to them and provide them with reliable, age-appropriate information; this information must enable them to form a critical opinion and participate actively, in their private or public life. In other words, the right to participation enables every child and young person to express his or her opinion and develop a critical mind, as well as to participate actively in the civic life and solidarity of their community.

Although children enjoy this right to participation today, this has not always been the case. In the past, their vulnerability was crystallized by the law, which traditionally considered children as the property of their father, mother or guardian [13] [15] [16]. Fortunately, this attitude has changed, and children are now recognized as people with rights.

The most decisive step was taken in 1989, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Resolution 44/25 of November 20, 1989, giving all children unequivocal status as subjects of the law. The Government of Burundi is bound to this Convention by Decree-Law no. 1/032 of August 16, 1990, ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child of November 20, 1989.

In addition, the Government of Burundi joins other nations in promoting human rights, as can be seen from Article 19 of the Constitution, which states that the rights and duties proclaimed and guaranteed by duly ratified international human rights instruments form an integral part of the Constitution [11] [14] [17] [18]. In terms of education, the inclusion of child participation is incorporated in Law n°1/19 of September 10, 2013 on the Organization of Basic and Secondary Education, which states that the Burundian education system opts for a learner-centered pedagogy [2] [19] [20]. Admittedly, this kind of pedagogy places particular emphasis on the child's participation in the teaching-learning process.

4.2. The Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Formally, freedom of opinion originated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of August 26, 1789; this text recognizes that everyone is free to think as they please, to hold opinions contrary to those of the majority, and to express them [5] [6] [13] [21]. According to this declaration, this freedom of opinion is multi-sectoral; so we shouldn't be surprised to hear talk of freedom of religion, of association, of assembly, of demonstration, and so on [13]-[15].

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights follows suit, clearly stating that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [1] [2] [22]. In turn, the African Charter on Human Rights incorporates the fact that the exercise of this right must be in accordance with the law [9] [10] [23] [24], clearly

stating that everyone has the right to express and disseminate their opinions within the framework of laws and regulations. Other commitments are made by Burundi through the provisions of Article 19 of the 2018 Constitution and its implementing texts. In the passages that follow, we develop the way in which this right to freedom of opinion and expression is exercised in the teaching-learning process, and in a way that complements the right to participation.

4.3. The Right to Participation and the Right to Freedom of Opinion in Classrooms

The right to participation is strongly enshrined in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is directly linked to a number of other rights, notably the right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression. Indeed, all individuals, no matter how young, must have the opportunity to express themselves, to participate in shaping their own lives, to act, to make choices and to have their opinions respected and valued.

According to UNICEF, this right applies to all spheres of a child's life: home, community and school [11] [25] [26]. The right to participate in the teaching-learning process, by expressing one's opinion through the channel of self-expression, leads to better academic performance. Through his participation, he hears, sees and acts, and all this by expressing himself on the matter to which he is subjected. Certainly, when children are recognized as having the right to raise their voices and act actively with all their senses, and are given the necessary means to do so, it's easier for them to develop self-confidence, which contributes to the realization of their full potential, and therefore to increasing their skills.

5. Conclusion

In a teaching and learning situation, it would be unrealistic to imagine any meaningful form of participation that does not involve the expression of an opinion. Participation, by its very nature, requires learners to share their thoughts, ideas, and perspectives. At the same time, it is important to recognize that once an opinion is expressed, participation becomes truly effective. This dynamic interaction fosters engagement, critical thinking, and mutual respect, thereby enhancing both the learning process and the development of learners' autonomy and confidence.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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