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YOUTH PARTICIPATION: A NEW APPROACH BASED ON THE INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN MODELS, VIEWS AND EUROPEAN POLICIES

Participación de los jóvenes: un nuevo enfoque basado en las intersecciones entre los modelos, los puntos de vista y las políticas europeas

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INTRODUCTION. Education policies have indicated the importance of youth participation in schools, which is one of the European Goals within the EU Youth Strategy framed by the EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027. The subject of youth participation refers to multiple definitions and diverse theoretical frameworks, which show the difficulty of finding a consensual definition or approach. The main objective of the current paper is to characterize youth participation models and to identify how those models convey different views, establishing possible connections with political discourses. **METHOD.** The study is based on an interpretive perspective. Data was collected by documentary analysis of 28 models of youth participation, which were analysed in the light of four pre-established categories: orthodox, multidimensional participation, qualitative and non-conformist. **RESULTS.** The majority of the 28 models of youth participation were specifically designed for children and young people; they fit a bottom-up perspective and were focused on non-formal education contexts. In addition, these models underline a multidimensional view of participation. **DISCUSSION.** The results evidence a trend towards considering an ideological relationship between youth participation and democracy, as advocated in European youth policies.

Keywords: *Participation, Youth, Civic engagement, Policy.*

Introduction

Youth participation in public policies has been seen as a problem from the lens of low turnout rates at local, national and European democratic elections. However, the apparent lack of participation is contradicted when young people are engaged in various causes, through public demonstrations or involvement in social media networks (Ekman and Erik, 2012). Despite European youth policies investing in the participation of young people in decision-making processes, it appears that participation does not favour school settings and, on the contrary, community contexts are more frequently evoked, as are non-governmental organizations or non-formal learning for youth participation (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2017). In this sense, it is important to study models of youth participation (MYP) in establishing relationships with the views in which they are framed.

Taking this as a starting point, a study was developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ project, the BE PART – Youth-Led Development for Schools’ Participatory Management (ref. 612175-EPP-1-2019-1-PT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN), which involves four countries (Portugal, Spain, Greece and Latvia) and eight partners. In each country, one of the partners is a school, involving students aged between 13-15 years old with disadvantaged backgrounds.

Related to this project, the study presented in this article aimed to characterize 28 MYP and to bring to light how those models convey different views of youth participation, establishing possible connections with European policies. In this sense, after an overview of youth participation within EU policies, this article systematizes a theoretical framework of youth participation, followed by the study methodology, results and discussion.

Youth participation within EU policies

Youth participation is not a new theme in European Politics. “The EU has already been running

a dedicated EU Youth Policy cooperation based on the principles of active participation and equal access to opportunities since 2002, in synergy with other policies targeting young people” (European Commission, 2018, p. 1). Youth participation was a key topic in the European Union Youth Strategy 2010-2018 (European Commission, n.d.) and one of the eight areas to promote. The main objectives of this strategy were: to develop mechanisms to engage in dialogue with young people and facilitate their participation in the shaping of national policies; to support youth organizations, including local and national youth councils; to promote participation of under-represented groups of young people in politics, youth organizations, and other civil society organizations; and to support ways of “learning to participate” from an early age. One of the strategies to achieve these objectives was to offer support for projects providing opportunities for young people to participate in cross-border projects and events through the Erasmus+ programme (previously, these kinds of efforts were reflected by other programmes like YOUTH (2000-2006), Youth in Action (2007-2013), and now Erasmus+ Youth (2014-2020).

The 2012 EU Youth Report (European Commission, 2012) presented the results of the first cycle of the open method of coordination in the youth field (2010-2012). It includes a general overview of youth policy and shows the status of the situation of young people in the European Union regarding youth participation (namely, young peoples’ interests in politics, their participation in representative democracy, other forms of participation and renewed opportunities for participation offered by new media). One year later, during the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, it was reinforced youth participation as a priority in public policies, recommending member States to facilitate and to encourage youth participation in politics and civil societies at both local community and national levels. Children and young people’s participation are topics included in the European Union’s broader strategy of “building

a Europe for and with children” (Council of Europe, 2012), and one of the main objectives of this strategy for the rights of the child (2012-2015) was precisely to promote child participation.

In 2014, the EU-CoE youth partnership team established the Reflection Group on Youth Participation in order to invite policymakers, practitioners and researchers to continue promoting the participation of young people in all spheres of their lives. Both institutions were in tune with regard to participation as a priority, as can be observed in their respective youth policy documents, the EU Youth Strategy and Agenda 2020. The recommendations of this workgroup, presented in a document untitled “Revisiting youth participation: current challenges, priorities and recommendations” (European Commission and Council of Europe, n.d.), were in line with the Multilateral Co-operation Project (MCP) “Participation of young people in the democratic Europe” and the importance of documenting and disseminating better practices was emphasized.

In the Plan for Youth for 2014-2015 (2014/C 183/02) (European Union, 2014), the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States underlined “empowerment”, with a special focus on access to autonomy, participation and active citizenship.

The 6th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue – Youth in Europe: What’s Next?, which took place in 2017-2018, aimed to join young’s voices people and contribute together to creating the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. As a result, eleven European Youth Goals were put forward. One of these 11 goals was Space and Participation for All. “Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy” (European Commission, 2018) was designed in 2018 to increase accessibility, visibility and impact to ensure better participation for young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities. This strategy predicted that the Erasmus+ programme would be a part of the solution to promote participation in

cross-border learning mobility and solidarity. The EU Youth Strategy is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027 (European Union, 2018) and it is supported on three core areas of action: engage (fostering young people’s participation in civic and democratic life), connect (connecting young people across the European Union and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding) and empower (supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work). One of its overall principles is expressed in the Resolution of the Council of the European Union (2018/C 456/01, p. 3): “Participation: recognizing that all young people are a resource to society, all policies and activities concerning young people should uphold young people’s right to participate in the development, implementation and follow-up of policies affecting them by means of meaningful participation of young people and youth organizations. In this context, policies should be built in recognition of the changes brought about by digital communication affecting democratic and civic participation”. Once again, mobilizing EU programmes and funds is crucial in the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy.

Models of youth participation – theoretical framework

MYP are frameworks that guide the participatory process in the design, implementation and evaluation of school daily activities. They support teacher and student engagement with the ways in which positioning, power, and privilege can influence participatory opportunities. The framework reinforces vision, quality and impact of the intervention.

MYP attempts to classify participatory practices, and often use hierarchical structures to identify young people’s involvement with decision-making or acting for change. Several MYP have been designed with different typologies

and degrees of youth participation to foster them. Regardless of the degree of their complexity, those models conceive hierarchies of participation but, according to Cahill and Dadvand (2018), do not always take cultural, political or ethical patterns that could impact on participatory processes into account. This is the case of “Ladder of Participation” (Hart, 1992). Other models, such as “Degrees of Participation” (Treseder and Fajerman, 1997) tried to overcome this weakness by proposing a non-hierarchical structure and considering that the choice of participatory methods should occur in response to context, tasks and individuals. Other models, such as “Pathways to Participation” (Shier, 2006), highlight the dynamic features of the participatory process (which is influenced by contextual, cultural, institutional and practical factors) and focus on the results of this process in terms of youth empowerment, as well on the different degrees of commitment to the process of “empowerment” adopted by adults and organizations. Nevertheless, this adult-centric focus was managed by other models, such as “Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE) Pyramid” (Wong *et al.*, 2010), which considers different levels of youth-adult involvement. The shift from an adult-centric mindset to a youth-driven approach for schools’ participation requires an increase in egalitarian relations between students and teachers, stimulation for youth to express opinions and appreciation of their perspectives and real-life experiences. The potential to positively influence both students and school development can be encouraged by actively engaging with youth. Nevertheless, “[...] researchers still have a limited understanding of what core elements are necessary to make youth–adult partnerships successful” (Wong *et al.*, 2010, p. 112).

Youth participation had different approaches and theoretical perspectives. Ribeiro *et al.* (2017), focusing on civic and political participation, identified four distinct views: orthodox (OV), broad/multidimensional participation (MV), qualitative (QV) and non-conformist (NCV).

The OV holds that participation is always positive for individuals and societies and is sustained in traditional forms of participation (elections, political parties, youth associations and other more formal organizations). The responsibility for non-participation is attributed to young people. According to this view, the lack of participation is a threat to democratic societies because it places the legitimization of institutionalized democracies in doubt.

The MV calls the OV into question, because it also considers participation in unconventional/informal contexts and conceives new forms of youth participation. In any case, the effects of experiences of participation on individuals and societies are not considered. The new participation forms are products of current social transformation, refusing the idea that youth civil and political participation is low.

The QV is based on the assumption that participation is not always positive regarding its outcomes. Participatory experiences propitiate the development of positive and/or negative dimensions of psychological functioning. So, the quality of participatory experiences determines personal and interpersonal development. It takes the risks associated with participation experiences into account (potentially promoting stereotypes, conformity, scepticism and lack of security) and underlines the importance of emotions in participation experiences, in a pluralistic rationale. This view highlights the importance of critical reflection about experiences in a context open to diversity, a central condition for individuals’ development.

The NCV assumes a relationship between education, participation and democracy. It calls the *status quo* into question, in the sense that citizenship is not supported by the reproduction of the existing order. This view calls for a more politicized understanding of participation and strives for the pillars of democracy: inclusion, justice and equity. Democracy is the ideological factor that mobilizes education and participation. The

core of this view is to educate young people, making them ready for their role as democratic, participating and active citizens. In this sense, the authors bring into question “top-down educational approaches on individuals, based on learning objectives that deprive them of its subjectivity, its critical capacity, that is, of its political dimension” (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2017, p. 435).

These four presented views support the analysis of the MYP presented in this study. The characterization of MYP aims to allow the match between these models and those views, trying to establish possible connections with European policies.

Method

The study’s methodological procedures were based on the document analysis of Youth Participation Models (Barros *et al.*, 2020) and included the identification of meanings based on the Ribeiro *et al.* (2017) typology. There were followed three phases: preparation, characterization and analysis. In the first procedure, 28 MYP were identified by the four country partners (19

MYP were selected from Nonformality.org, 2011, and the remaining 9 MYP were proposed directly by the BE PART partners).

At the characterization phase, the 28 models identified were characterised according to: 1) the contexts of participation (school/community; virtual environments for participation); 2) the model design and construction initiative (top-down/bottom-up); and 3) the specificity of the model as a function of the target group (models specifically built for children and young people/models applicable to the general population, including children and youth).

At the analysis phase, four pre-established categories were considered, based on the different participation views (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2017) mentioned before. Following the authors’ assumptions that “these strands are seen as complementary rather than as in competition” (p. 427), was decided to reinforce the discussion regarding this issue, before more accurately allocating each model to a certain view. Table 1 points out the categories that sustain the mentioned participation views, and briefly describe them.

TABLE 1. Description of participation views

Participation Views	Description
Orthodox View	Participation is always positive and based on traditional forms of participation. The responsibility for non-participation is placed on young people
Multidimensional View	Participation is not restricted to conventional contexts and includes new forms of participation tending to be more fluid, less institutionalised, less hierarchical and more horizontal (for example in the form of voluntary work, community activities and online activities). They can be associated with opportunities for personal and social development (which include possibilities for reflection, action, interaction with others, conflict management or pluralism, etc.), but the focus is not the effects of participation experiences on individuals or communities
Qualitative View	Participation is not always positive and experiences of participation are differentiated according to their developmental quality. Its pluralist perspective considers the risks of participation, emotions experienced and the critical reflection about those experiences in a diversification context
Non-conformist View	Participation is sustained by the democratic ideology. Its political dimension is the underpin of an active participation. Participation implies an active citizenship role in which youth is engaged and think critically to create innovative solutions for a better society

At the end, the researchers participating in the study filled out a double-entry table, categorizing each of the 28 MYP in the pre-established characteristics/categories.

In the second phase of data analysis, each of the researcher's categorizations were compared via joined-up thinking. Results of the individually conducted analyses were compared and coding made by researchers was marked as "Consensus" or "Dissensus".

In the following phase, individual researcher's tables were compared. The results of the classification-indexing process were marked as "Consensus" or "Dissensus". This process allowed a final categorization.

Results and discussion

The presentation and discussion of results are guided by the study objectives, namely to characterize youth participation models and to identify how those models convey different views, establishing possible connections with European polices.

Models of youth participation: context, design and target group

As mentioned above, the 28 MYP were identified by the BE PART partners. Table 2 shows the MYP and the main context of participation in which they were initially designed to be implemented.

As can be seen in Table 1, 28 MYP from 1992 to 2020 were identified. The majority of the MYP (N = 20; 71.4%) were designed to be implemented in a community context. Fourteen of them were simultaneously conceived to be implemented in schools; only 2 were designed specifically for school context (school context – N = 17; 60.7%). Six of the identified MYP (21.4%) consider online environments.

Despite the amount and variety of MYP, Cahill and Dadvand (2018) argue that these models have been useful in classifying participatory practices, but they tend "not to engage with the varying purposes and wider socio-cultural contexts in which participation occurs" (p. 244).

Participatory asset-based approaches that enhance youth participation are gaining recognition, not only in research fields (Andersson, 2017; Ribeiro *et al.*, 2016; Cahill and Dadvand, 2018; Frasquilho *et al.*, 2018; Shier, 2006), but in community contexts and organizations, including schools. Even though there is a European digital education action plan foreseen (2021-2027) and considering the relevance and timeliness of the topic, as we live in a digital and networked society, the number of selected MYP designed for online environment is not particularly large.

The MYP design was classified as top-down or bottom-up, according to the development initiative or effective participation. Kudva and Driskell (2009, p. 368) differentiated these designs by "participation as a tool of co-optation by those who hold power" [...] or alternatively "the ways in which participation embodies real, if often imperfect, empowerment of communities by allowing them to have some voice in democratic decision making".

In this study, these two design forms are not very unbalanced. Even so, more than half of the MYP (57.1%) were identified as having a bottom-up design or approach, because of some specific characteristics, such as:

- Having been designed by "observing people participation" (e.g. 4 Cs of Online Participation – Derek Wenmoth, 2006), conceived from roles and interactions analysis of online communities (e.g. Four L Engagement Model – Tony Karrer, 2006), supported on the understanding how people approach these

TABLE 2. MYP participation context

Year	MYP	School	Community	Virtual Environment
1992	1. Roger Hart: Ladder of children participation	X	X	
1997	2. Phil Treseder: Degrees of participation	X	X	
2010	3. BJ Fogg: Behaviour Grid		X	
2000	4. Gilly Salmon: 5 stages Model			X
2001	5. Harry Shier: Pathway to participation	X	X	
2001	6. UNICEF: Strategic approach to participation	X	X	
2001	7. Trilla and Novella: Trilla and Novella Participation Model	X	X	
2002	8. Francis and Lorenz: Seven realms of participation	X	X	
2003	9. FCYO (Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing): Youth Engagement Continuum	X	X	
2003	10. RMSOS Framework: Council of Europe	X	X	
2003	11. E-Participation Framework: United Nations			X
2003	12. Adam Fletcher: Ladder of Volunteer Participation		X	
2006	13. Derek Wenmoth: 4 C's of Online Participation			X
2006	14. Tony Karrer: Four L Engagement Model			X
2006	15. Lawndes and Pratchett: The CLEAR Participation Model		X	
2009	16. Kudva and Driskell: Key Dimensions of Participation	X	X	
2009	17. Tim Davies: Matrix of Participation	X	X	
2010	18. Bernoff and Li: Ladder of Online Participation			X
2010	19. DFID-CSO: Three-Lens approach to Participation	X	X	
2010	20. Harry Shier: The Participation Tree		X	
2011	21. Tim Davies: Six Principles of Online Participation			X
2011	22. Wong <i>et al.</i> : Typology of Youth Participation	X	X	
2011	23. Youth Participation in Finland	X	X	
2012	24. Shier <i>et al.</i> : The Yin-yang Model of Youth Participation	X	X	
2016	25. Les Robinson: Curiosity-ometer		X	
2016	26. yMIND Model		X	
2020	27. EAR Model	X		
2020	28. SEDIN Model	X		

technologies, not just which ones they use (e.g. Ladder of Online Participation – Bernoff and Li, 2010) and developed in consultation with young people (e.g.

DFID-CSO: Three-Lens Approach to Participation – DFID CSO Youth Working Group, UK Department for International Development, 2010).

- Communities were co-researchers and central in the design and implementation of the project (e. g. Key Dimensions of Participation – Kudva and Driskell, 2009).
- It is the result of a process of reflection on a participatory research project (e. g. The YinYang Model of Youth Participation – Shier *et al.*, 2012).
- It gives young people opportunities to be able to chart the progress of their involvement within an organization and how they are able to make that progress (e.g. The Participation Tree – Harry Shier, 2010).

Regarding to the target group, 19 MYP (67.9%) were specifically designed for children and young people and the rest were designed for general population.

In sum, the MYP selection privileged children and youth participation focused on non-formal education contexts, and designed with a bottom-up perspective.

Views of participation

After characterizing the MYP, an analysis was made based on the typology of Ribeiro *et al.* (2017), considering that this typology offers a more complete and original organization of the theoretical perspectives in this field. The MYP classification according to typology of Ribeiro *et al.* (2017) can be seen at Table 3.

The analysis of the MYP distribution into de the four views is presented in relative frequencies, in Graphic 1.

Figure 1 shows that selected models are less likely to fit an OV of youth participation (7.1%). Based on the assumption that the participation of young people is intrinsically and irrevocably positive, this view favours more traditional and formal participation. On the other hand, the

observed disinvestment of young people in terms of participation through formal structures blames them for the devaluation of the democratic principles underlying youth participation processes. This OV is evidenced by the assumption that adult influence on the youth participation model is decisive, as can be seen in the Phil Treseder's Degrees of Participation Model. In a school context, students need to be empowered and guided by an independent and trusted person to achieve forms of full participation. Youth participation is operationalized in traditional practices in which voting and membership of formal structures is evident: School assemblies, students' representatives in school general council or similar structures, class councils and delegate assemblies. Rather than proactive, the attitude and behaviours of students depend on adults that support them and act as a means of appeal or complaint if anything goes wrong. The same OV is inserted into BJ Fogg's behaviour grid model, since it was developed to arrive at a clearer understanding of change in behaviour. It assumes the aim of increasing frequency and intensity of participative behaviour, and behaviour change represents 15 ways behaviour in which can change with different persuasion techniques and psychological strategies. In its transposition into the school context, the idea that the increase in participation behaviours is always translated into gains, remains. In this sense, participation is always positive, as assumed by the OV.

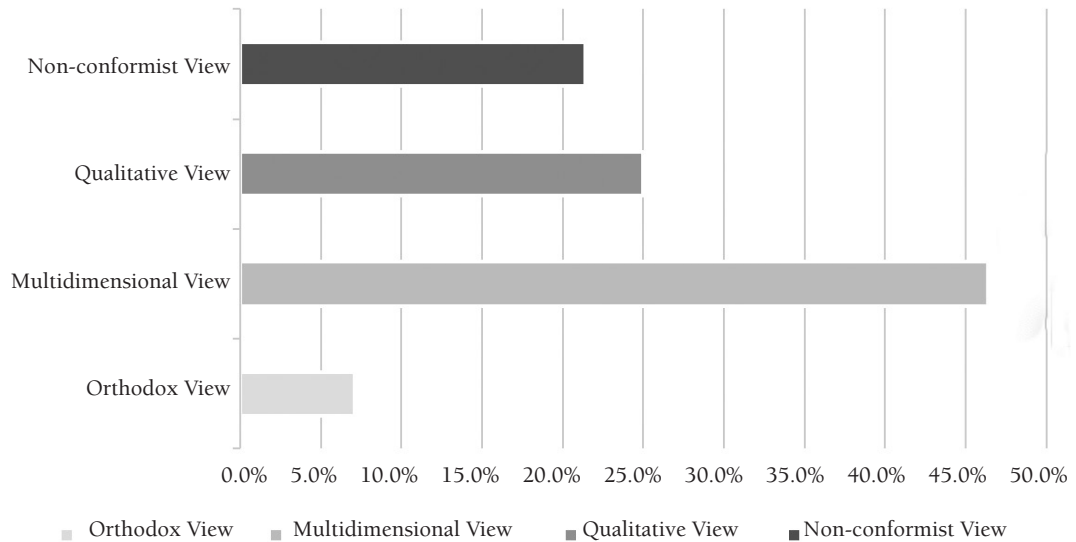
In contrast, the MV was that which concentrated the greatest number of models selected by partners (46.4%), as can be seen in Figure 1. This view assumes a broader definition of youth participation. Actually, this is a more comprehensive perspective which encompasses multiple forms of youth participation in diverse contexts, including schools. The element which differentiates it most from the OV concerns the greater plurality, flexibility, horizontality and informality of the forms of participation. It is curious to note that almost all the participation

TABLE 3. MYP classification according to four views of participation

Year	MYP	Orthodox View	Multidimensional View	Qualitative View	Non-conformist View
1992	1. Roger Hart: Ladder of children participation		X		
1997	2. Phil Treseder: Degrees of participation	X			
2010	3. BJ Fogg: Behaviour Grid	X			
2000	4. Gilly Salmon: 5 stages Model		X		
2001	5. Harry Shier: Pathway to participation			X	
2001	6. UNICEF: Strategic approach to participation		X		
2001	7. Trilla and Novella: Trilla and Novella Participation Model			X	
2002	8. Francis and Lorenz: Seven realms of participation		X		
2003	9. FCYO (Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing): Youth Engagement Continuum				X
2003	10. RMSOS Framework: Council of Europe			X	
2003	11. E-Participation Framework: United Nations		X		
2003	12. Adam Fletcher: Ladder of Volunteer Participation				X
2006	13. Derek Wenmoth: 4 C's of Online Participation		X		
2006	14. Tony Karrer: Four L Engagement Model		X		
2006	15. Lawndes and Pratchett: The CLEAR Participation Model			X	
2009	16. Kudva and Driskell: Key Dimensions of Participation			X	
2009	17. Tim Davies: Matrix of Participation		X		
2010	18. Bernoff and Li: Ladder of Online Participation		X		
2010	19. DFID-CSO: Three-Lens approach to Participation		X		
2010	20. Harry Shier: The Participation Tree				X
2011	21. Tim Davies: Six Principles of Online Participation		X		
2011	22. Wong <i>et al.</i> : Typology of Youth Participation				X
2011	23. Youth Participation in Finland		X		
2012	24. Shier <i>et al.</i> : The Yin-yang Model of Youth Participation				X
2016	25. Les Robinson: Curiosity-ometer		X		
2016	26. yMIND Model			X	
2020	27. EAR Model				X
2020	28. SEDIN Model			X	

Note: provided by Ribeiro et al. (2017).

GRAPHIC 1. MYP views



models developed in virtual environments can be included in this MV, since digital participation can be considered an alternative and innovative form of youth participation, according to Crowley and Moxon (2018). In addition, digital technology offers a genuinely new way of reaching people, providing real-time responses and a participative means of creating solutions. It is the case of Gilly Salmon's 5-Stage Model of online participation, which enables fully collaborative ways of participating online, Derek Wenmoth's 4 Cs of Online Participation Model, in which participants move from passive to active to proactive involvement in their digital communities, or Tim Davies' Six Principles of Online Participation Model, for a youth-driven approach to youth participation in projects (Davies *et al.*, 2011). Other examples are the United Nations E-Participation Framework, which enables neutral, free discussions between students and promotes student empowerment, offering them the possibility to express their preference on the final decision, or Tony Karrer's Four L Engagement Model, also conceived from roles and interactions analysis of online communities.

Other models may not have been conceived for online environments, yet offer non-traditional

forms of youth participation. A strategic approach to participation (UNICEF), includes alternative forms of participation, such as "parent-teacher associations, a critical review of the roles of students as 'prefects' or 'monitors', and the creation of mechanisms that ensure students are consulted when key decisions are made" (UNICEF, 2001, p. 30). Other alternative forms of participation include youth activism and protest, as well. The diversity of forms of participation can also be observed in Francis and Lorenz's Seven Realms of Participation Model, particularly as regards the proactive realm, because the process empowers children and adults to reinvent childhood (Francis and Lorenzo, 2002). In the same direction, Tim Davies' Matrix of Participation considers different participation approaches, including creative projects and the networks development beyond just the peer group.

According to Figure 1, the QV is visible in almost 1/4 of the models selected in this study. As mentioned before, the cornerstone of this perspective is the impact of participatory activities and experiences on youth development. The assumption that participation always benefits youth development is questioned. However, the gains usually pointed out in understanding or

security self-perception. As Ferreira, Azevedo and Menezes (2012) stated, "... no participation might be better than low quality participation, and it is surely possible to say that higher quality experiences do make a difference" (p. 607). Participation experiences can entail risks, such as lack of confidence, conformity or acritical attitudes. The QV is focused on the quality of participation experiences that impacts positively or negatively on the development of the different dimensions of psychological functioning. Participatory activities characterized by openness to diversity, inclusive trends, critical thinking and acceptance of individual, social and cultural differences are expected to be positive participatory experiences. Harry Shier's Pathway to Participation is one model of children and youth participation where these issues arise. In the author's words, "This model makes no suggestion that children should be pressed to take responsibility they do not want, or that is inappropriate for their level of development and understanding. However, in practice adults are more likely to deny children developmentally appropriate degrees of responsibility than to force too much responsibility on them" (Shier, 2006, p. 115). The quality of participatory experiences is also evident within the Council of Europe's RMSOS Framework, since the key elements of the model should be analysed to provide meaningful participation. So, the right means, space, opportunities and support within communities, organizations or projects are subject to spaces for reflection. In these, young people have the opportunity to develop their critical thinking and to check whether the conditions are met for truly emancipatory participation and to develop the skills required to perform social analysis, planning, communication or decision-making (Council of Europe, 2015). Developmental concerns can be observed in the Trilla and Novella Participation Model, because the kinds of childhood participation are qualitatively and phenomenologically different, besides their provision of significant elements for the development of participatory competences. Finally, the Yinyang Model (Shier *et al.*, 2012) focuses on both human development approaches and a

human rights-based approach. Child and youth empowerment are at the heart of the issue. Young people have the opportunity to reflect about the determinants of participation, within an inclusion/exclusion approach, and to identify, understand and deal with factors that are sources of exclusion and discrimination.

The last view under analysis, the NCV, frames 21.4% of the MYP selected. In this scope, emphasis is on the possibility to change the world and societies, rather than simple integration into society and the development of attitudes and dispositions to respond to its requirements. Proactivity and advocacy are central within the NCV. The above-mentioned Yinyang Model (Shier *et al.*, 2012) is also likely to be framed here. In the same sense, the political dimension inherent to social justice, inclusion and equity principles, as the focal point of the Youth Engagement Continuum from the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing – FCYO, can be translated into civic engagement through collective empowerment, youth organizing and advocacy in order to create meaningful institutional change. In essence, young people's engagement is part of the community solutions and they are proactive organizers of citizenship actions.

Models and views of youth participation – intersections with European policies

The complexity of the concept of youth participation and what it encompasses in its diversity are in line with the current challenges faced by societies and schools (Torres-Harding *et al.*, 2018). The fact that the majority of the selected MYP share a MV of participation reinforces that "The school can also serve as a useful base from which to analyse and link with governance processes in society" (UNICEF, p. 30). The links between schools and the community organizations, such as municipalities or non-governmental organizations, seems to be a way to promote formal and non-formal learning focused on youth participation for active and democratic citizenship,

as already pointed out by several authors (Augsberger *et al.*, 2019; Ribeiro *et al.*, 2016; Taylor and Bovill, 2018; Wilson *et al.*, 2007).

A MV, favoured in the MYP selection, as shown by the results, corresponds to the idea that youth participation favours connections between school settings and community environments, making participation beyond the school walls possible. In fact, according to the EU Youth Strategy, Member States are encouraged to focus on:

- Encouraging social and civic engagement of young people including participation in youth organisations or online activism.
- Helping prepare young people for participation, through youth work, youth parliaments or simulations, actions around civic education and media literacy in synergy with formal education and public authorities.
- Exploring innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation” (European Commission, 2018, p. 5).

It is also possible to notice that the MYP selection reinforces the concept of youth participation in local life as defined by the Council of Europe (2015): “Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society” (p. 12).

The fact that more than 20% of the selected MYP were designed to be carried out in virtual environments, may be due to the current youth interest, in line with the EU Youth Strategy for 2019-2027. This Strategy shows a trend towards new forms of participation and a need to promote youth participation through their preferred channels, such as online environments.

Quality participatory experiences that emerged from MYP selection with 25%, demonstrate the importance of improving development conditions,

not only at an individual level, but also in schools and their respective communities. The same idea is also sustained by Kränzl-Nagl and Zartler (2010), in the scope of the Cross-European project Children, Democracy and Participation in Society, commissioned by the Council of Europe’s Forum for Children and Families, when they evaluated the participation projects results with children and young people in schools and communities across European countries. They concluded that “Participation projects can generate an increased awareness of children’s rights within the community, and can strengthen community relations through intergenerational dialogue and shared experiences. Adults reported that they learned more about the conditions of modern childhood as a result of participation with children” (p. 172).

The NCV that encompassed about 1/5 of the selected models, can be understood as a way of changing the schools’ *status quo*, recognizing them as formal, hierarchical and regulatory institutions (Treviño *et al.*, 2019). Even so, the models selected highlight the importance of promoting democracy and the political dimension of youth participation. Social problems, such as the lack of social cohesion or the absence of mechanisms to balance cultural diversity, start to raise awareness of educational professionals, making them co-responsible in the process of youth education with regard to active citizenship participation (Rincón, 2014). Political participation is greatly dependent on students’ civic and political backgrounds; therefore, mechanisms of social reproduction must be considered. However, the role of the education system and schools, in different forms of expected political participation, cannot be overlooked, since it impacts school governance and teacher practices. Participatory, democratic, and inclusive school environments have the duty, jointly with parents, to teach the youth about active and engaged participation in a democratic polity (Kupchik and Catlaw, 2015; Lee and Chiu, 2017).

According to the European Union Youth Strategy (2010-2018), this is particularly relevant to

national policies and to vulnerable groups of young people who are at risk of not being represented in politics. Above all, learning how to participate since childhood is an essential element in the architecture of youth participation policies in Europe. All of this is reinforced in the EU Youth Strategy for 2019-2027 and, according to that, EU cooperation will focus on “Supporting ‘learning to participate’ and raising interest in participatory actions across Europe and beyond through Erasmus+”. In this scope, this study puts in evidence the BE PART project.

Conclusion

This study analysed 28 MYP selected by partners involved in an ERASMUS+ project. The analysis performed, supported by the lenses of theoretical views and European policies, allows some conclusions to be drawn.

First of all, MYP characterization shows that the majority of selected MYP were designed specifically for children and young people and there is a trend to privilege bottom-up approaches. Simultaneously, the majority of MYP are not specific to school contexts, but fit different community contexts. Thus, it can be concluded that the diversity of forms and contexts of participation offer young people more opportunities to participate in school and related contexts. This MYP characterization is in line with the EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027, which highlights renewed forms and opportunities for participation and active citizenship and based itself on the recognition of the civic and democratic participation of young people.

In regard to the identification of selected MYP that fits the different views, mostly suited the MV that conceives youth participation within unconventional/informal contexts and encompasses new forms of participation, including those supported by virtual environments. Youth developmental aspects were highlighted in the study presented in this article, due to the number of

selected models framed in the QV, which means that the quality of the participatory experience was a dimension considered in the model selection. Considering teachers as key elements in the success of initiatives for participation (Curtis, 2019; Leek, 2019; Slesh, 2019), it would also be interesting, in future studies, to explore whether they are aware of the iatrogenic effects resulting from poor quality participation practices and the associated risks. Finally, the NCV, identified in 1/5 of the MYP, may reflect a trend to gain ground on more OV of participation. The political idiosyncrasy of the NCV holds a strategic position for innovative forms of youth participation in democratic life and social and civic engagement. Again, this is in agreement with the EU Strategy for Youth 2019-2027 (Engage, Connect and Empower) and, at the same time, offers young people attractive, active and meaningful participation forms, such as activism and volunteering.

The recognition of the importance of studying youth participation also justifies giving attention to the ERASMUS+ programmes as a means of favouring the EU level cooperation supported on “learning to participate” and raising youth interest in participatory actions across Europe.

Conflicts of interest and competing interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest with this work.

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Resumen

Participación de los jóvenes: un nuevo enfoque basado en las intersecciones entre los modelos, los puntos de vista y las políticas europeas

INTRODUCCIÓN. Las políticas educativas han señalado la importancia de la participación de los jóvenes en las escuelas, que es uno de los objetivos europeos enmarcados en las políticas de cooperación para jóvenes de la EU para 2019-2027. La participación de los jóvenes tiene múltiples definiciones y aproximaciones teóricas que derivan en la dificultad de encontrar un enfoque consensuado. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es caracterizar los modelos de participación de los jóvenes e identificar cómo esos modelos transmiten diferentes puntos de vista, estableciendo posibles conexiones con las políticas europeas. **MÉTODO.** El estudio se basa en una perspectiva interpretativa. Los datos se recogieron mediante el análisis documental de 28 modelos de participación juvenil, que se sometieron a un proceso de clasificación-indización según cuatro categorías preestablecidas: ortodoxa, participación multidimensional, cualitativa e inconformista. **RESULTADOS.** La mayoría de los 28 modelos fueron diseñados específicamente para niños y jóvenes, se ajustan a una perspectiva ascendente y se centran en contextos de educación no formal. Además, estos modelos subrayan una perspectiva de participación multidimensional. **DISCUSIÓN.** Se evidencia la tendencia hacia la consideración de una relación ideológica entre la participación de los jóvenes y la democracia, tal y como se defiende en las políticas europeas de juventud.

Palabras clave: *Participación, Juventud, Compromiso cívico, Política.*

Résumé

La participation des jeunes : une nouvelle approche basée sur les croisements entre les modèles, les regards et les politiques européennes

INTRODUCTION. Dans le cadre des politiques d'éducation liées à la participation des jeunes dans les écoles, nous avons développé une étude orientée par les objectifs suivants : caractériser les modèles de participation des jeunes et identifier comment ces modèles véhiculent différents points de vue en établissant des connexions possibles avec les politiques européennes pour 2019-2027. **MÉTHODE.** L'étude est basée sur une perspective interprétative. Les données ont été recueillies par l'analyse documentaire de 28 modèles de participation des jeunes étant soumis à un processus de classification-indexation selon quatre catégories préétablies : orthodoxe, participation multidimensionnelle, qualitative et non-conformiste. **RÉSULTATS.** En ce qui concerne les caractéristiques, les modèles spécifiquement conçus pour les enfants et les jeunes, s'inscrivent dans une perspective ascendante et sont axés sur des contextes d'éducation non formelle. En ce qui concerne la vision véhiculée, ces modèles soulignent une perspective de participation multidimensionnelle et ils considèrent une relation idéologique entre la participation des jeunes et les systèmes démocratiques, comme le préconisent les politiques européennes de la jeunesse. **DISCUSSION.** La reconnaissance de l'importance de la participation des jeunes, conformément aux politiques européennes, justifie l'attention à la coopération au niveau de l'UE, soutenue par "l'apprentissage à la participation" et l'augmentation de l'intérêt des jeunes à travers toute l'Europe.

Mots-clés : *Participation, Jeunesse, Engagement civique, Politique.*

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