

Children and young  
people's active civic  
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Children and young people's active civic engagement and their participation in decision-making in organizations has attracted a lot of interest in recent times. Discuss the key issues that emerge in considering either children's or young people's civic engagement, focusing on at least one particular site of engagement (for example, education, community, politics). In the course of recent changes to the context and content of youth transitions the notion of citizenship has come to the fore as a means of discussing young people's move into independent membership of society.

Youth is an expansive moment, and young people moving towards social majority invariably feel the need for room to nurture and explore their emergent sense of themselves as individual people. However, children and young people are often seen as immature and lack of capability to participate in adult world, they have become semi-citizen overall. In this paper, I would like to discourse the different views of children and young people's active civic engagement and their participation in decision-making in organizations. I will address Cohen's (2005) two views of children in this paper, which is paternal and minor theory.

I will also discuss the key issues that emerge in considering either children's or young people's civic engagement. Lastly, I will focus on the education engagement of children and young people to better address the issues. In order to discuss the issue that children and young people's active civic engagement, it's better to give the definition of citizenship first, and then explore children and young people's role in citizenship. According to Hall, the meaning that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which

people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizen (Hall & Williamson, 1999: 2).

While children may lack full capability to act in the citizens, the political status to which they have been relegated leaves much to be desired. Roche argues that the demand that children be included in citizenship is simply a request that children be seen as members of society too, with a legitimate and valuable voice and perspectives (1999: 479). Lacking independent representation or a voice in politics and organizations, children and their interests often fail to be understood because the adults who do represent them conflate, or substitute, their own views for those of children. Children and young people are widely seen as lack of capacity. Such as rationality, cognition, dependency, and children is often have the need of protection from school and parents, and they are lack of life experiences to handle the problems. There has been much discourse about whether children and young people should active civic engagement, and whether they should participate in decision-making in organizations. Elizabeth F. Cohen is one of the supporter of children's voices should be heard and seen by the democratic society. She argues that children and young people are ill-governed and neglected by democratic politics (2005).

Children are simultaneously assumed to be citizens: they hold passports but they are judged to be incapable of citizenship in that they cannot make the rational and informed decisions that characterize self-governed. Theorists, both of democratic politics and of citizenship, have had difficulty addressing questions pertaining to the governance of children in liberal democracies and few explore the issue beyond pointing out that children don not hold full

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citizenship (Cohen, 2005: 222). It is easy enough to argue that children should not be civic engaged in democratic deliberation because they lack the fundamental capacities, furthermore, Cohen argues that children have claims on things that adults do not, a fact that makes them an exception in a number of ways that even other adult semi-citizens are not (2005). Dahl's discourse that children are seen as a justifiable and somewhat uninteresting exception to the rules of democracy rather than an instructive case of ambiguity of membership meriting sustained academic attention (1989: 127). Cohen also introduces two influential views of children, the paternal and the minor (2005).

She relates the paternal view to a misappropriation of authority over children by adults. Paternalism allows adults ownership of children's higher level interests and ultimately segregates children, confining them to the private realm of the family and excluding them from public affairs (Cohen 2005: 224). Miller argues that paternalism refers to policies and philosophies of public life that restrict the freedom of persons in order that their interests may be better served (1995: 367-8). Miller's argument generates both implicitly and explicitly a view that denies the citizenship of children. Implicitly, it focuses on the specific abilities children generally can be said to be lacking. Paternalist policies take the belief that children are immature and incapable of the sort of rational deliberation and decision-making that democratic self-governance requires.

The immaturity argument ultimately holds way, therefore, a degree of paternalism is appropriate in the political treatment of children (Cohen 2005: 225). In this way, it's worth recalling the status of children in Roman law, <https://assignbuster.com/children-and-young-peoples-active-civic-engagement-and-their-participation-in-decision-making-in-organizations/>

because Roman law formed the precursor to modern, legalistic and rights-based conceptions of citizenship (Pocock, 1995). Under Roman law, parental rights were parental rights, and parental rights extended from labor and property to the very lives of children. Therefore, children were so completely dominated under early regimes of citizenship, and it explains how and why they were excluded from the definitions of citizenship from Roman model until modern history. Cohen relates minor view to a substitution of adult interests for children's distinct interest (2005).

The minor view of children treats children as means to achieve adult ends. In so doing children's own interests are often obscured or elided with those of adult society. The minor view of children is preoccupied with children's status as potential adults. It emphasizes the citizens they will become, the vision of society that they ought to fit into, and the needs of the society that will welcome children as they become full adult members of this society. Cohen also argues that children currently status as minors is taken to be both temporary and preparatory (2005: 230).

As such, the policies and laws that affect them are designed not with a mind to the individual people that make up the youth population, certainly, to the people various adults wish them to become. Once again, the minor view relates the acknowledging that children are not yet fully mature and that the experiences society, and their parents afford them will shape the citizens they become. However, children are individuals with pressing political interests, and needs prior to reaching the age of majority, not all of those needs are related to the adults children will become. Furthermore, Cohen argues that children may have undeveloped, or developing, minds and <https://assignbuster.com/children-and-young-peoples-active-civic-engagement-and-their-participation-in-decision-making-in-organizations/>

capabilities, but this seem to offering them more, not fewer pportunities to explore worlds outside of that which exists in their home(2005: 234). Except children and young people's capability of participating in decision-making in organizations, youth transition is also another important factor to considerate it. It is widely acknowledged that youth transitions are different for young people today than for previous generations.

Explanations for this lie with a combination of factors that include long-term socio-structural, economic and demographic changes, and also policy responses to these (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). The changes in youth transitions have affected different young people in different ways and to different degrees. Nonetheless, a general agreement that a process which was once more or less straightforward has become increasingly protracted and complex (Morrow & Richards, 1996). This complexity reflects a freeing up of established patterns of transition, and it comes with a sense in which youth transition are now more open-ended and fluid.

Furthermore, the introduction of the concept of citizenship enables us to recognize one of the ways in which young people continue to attain social majority despite the ambiguities of unemployment, longer periods spent in training or education, and extended dependency on parent. Citizenship rights and duties are acquired automatically with age, and on the whole independently of an individual's economic status, making the eventual attainment of adult citizenship more or less a certainty (Jenkins, 1990: 135).

There is a distinction to be drawn between the formal entitlement of citizenship and the capacity to exercise these. While Parker defines

citizenship as a status that represents a collection of rights and duties  
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conferred by political authority rather than stemming from economic power or social position (1998, p. xi), non-political factors can and do impact on people's ability to make the most of their status as citizens, and in this respect, many young people can be seen as having had their citizenship status substantially undermined in recent years.

The conception of citizenship are changing rapidly since recent years have seen citizenship gain a new prominence in political debates and policy agendas, this indicates a shift away from a 'passive' citizenship towards an active participation. The notion of 'active citizen' emerging first on the right of the political spectrum in the late 1980s, active citizenship stressed the importance of personal responsibility and working outwards from this, a wider duty of care for one's community (Hall & Williamson, 1999: 503). Lord Chancellor had a speaking in January 1998, argued for a concerted effort to bring young people into a more active conception of citizenship, participation and mutuality with society. However, many recent pronouncements according to Chancellor's speech argued on the importance of citizenship, these comments ere directed at young people, especially disadvantaged young people (France 1996). Education is one of children and young people's civic engagement site. Schools achieve the best results in fostering civic engagement when they rigorously teach civic content and skills, ensure an open classroom climate for discussing issues, emphasize the importance of the electoral process, and encourage a participative school culture.

Schools whose students do not plan to attend college and have few educational resources at home face a special challenge. Citizenship has also become an increasingly explicit priority in schooling and education, it is a <https://assignbuster.com/children-and-young-peoples-active-civic-engagement-and-their-participation-in-decision-making-in-organizations/>

quality, capacity or set of skills and understandings to be elicited from and instilled in young people. Inevitably debates about education for citizenship have at their root the question of what is meant by citizenship. According to Chisholm, there is no fixed and final answer to this question, 'no timeless definition of citizenship and certainly no timeless realization of what it means to be a citizen (1997, p2). The IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) Civic Education Study (2001) reveals that young people believe that good citizenship includes the obligation to vote and to obey the law. However, four out of five students do not intend to participate in conventional political activities such as joining a political party, writing letters to newspapers, or being a candidate for a local office.

Nevertheless, students are willing to become engaged in other forms of civic life such as collecting money for a social cause or charity, and they believe it is important for adult citizens to participate in community and environmental groups. Schools can play an important role in preparing our young people to be more knowledgeable about democratic processes and more engaged in civic life. By teaching civic content and skills, modeling democratic practices in classrooms, emphasizing the importance of elections, and providing opportunities for students to participate in civic-oriented extra-curricular activities, schools can contribute significantly to encouraging today's students to become tomorrow's participating citizens (Purta J. T, 2005). Education and schools engage children and young people who have more civic knowledge are more likely to be inclined toward participating in the civic responsibility of voting.



Curricular priorities within schools seem to play a role in shaping this expected behavior. In addition, Schools encourage students choose to belong to organizations in which they can work with peers and see results from their efforts. Youth organizations inside and outside school, therefore, have untapped potential to positively influence the civic participation of young people. Education make children and young people seen their possibilities in participating in civic engagement in organization, for instance, young children can construct valid meaning about the world and their place in it, young children know the world in alternative ways to adult, and young children's perspectives and insights can help adults to understand their experiences better. Overall, there still less attention has been paid the ways in which politics and in particular adult politics constructs childhood. Law and politics play an important constitutive role in determining how children experience the early yeas of their citizenship.

Just as McNaughton(2005)said: " Political tactics to transform the landscape of society to build with children respectful and ethical environments that seeks to build democratic communities for children to grow and live. " The paternal and the minor view each contributes a distinct set of pathologies to the governance of children while also reinforcing the strength and apparent validity of the other. Even though we can't deny that adults play a major role in determining policies that will affect children, but the languages such as ' best interests of the child' or simply ignoring the interests and voices of children is a poor substitute for better thought-out, more inclusive policies. The civic engagement such as education teaching children and young people

to be 'civics' in citizenship, and be a statutory part of pupil's education entitlement, with specified learning outcomes.

In the context of social change, with youth transitions more open and diverse, but also more uncertain and difficult for some, and with traditional grounds for affiliation and belonging shifting, according to Hall, space and place are significant themes (1999). For young people looking to 'go public' with their interests and concerns, youth work settings can provide a welcome stepping-stone to wider involvement and understanding at a local level and beyond, makes children and young people are not only seen themselves as semi-citizens. Biography: 1. Hall, T and Williamson, H. (1999), *Citizenship and community*. Leicester: Leicester Youth Work Press.

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