

## Participation Rights of Child in School: A Study of Perception Among Pre-Service Teacher Trainees



### Social Science

**KEYWORDS:** child, participation, school social work, UNCRC

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### ABSTRACT

*All human beings have equal rights and should be treated with dignity. Universal Declaration of Human rights are the precursor for the convention on children rights. Children are more vulnerable than adults and can easily be exploited, hence upholding children rights are pivotal. The paper analyses the participation rights of child in the school. The study is descriptive in nature, simple random sampling (n =72) is used and the self-prepared questionnaire is filled in by the respondents. Likert scale is used to study the perception among the pre-service teacher trainees. The results reveal that the pre-service teacher trainees have medium perception, overwhelming majority of respondents have not attended child rights training and there is no difference among gender in perception.*

### Introduction

Human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are realized on December 10, 1948 'as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations' (Levin, 2011). The UDHR is a precursor for enacting Children Rights through United Nations Convention on Rights of Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC (1989) draws attention to four sets of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights viz survival, protection, participation and development. The right to participation includes (1) respect for the views of the child, (2) freedom of expression (3) access to appropriate information (4) freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Perception is the experience of objects, events or relationship obtained by extracting information from and interpreting sensations (Desiderato et al., 1976). Moreover Mangal (2010) said perception is a highly individualized psychological process that helps an organism in organizing and interpreting the complex patterns of sensory stimulation for giving them the necessary meaning to initiate his behavioural response. A noted philosopher Krishnamurti (1992) said 'the real problem in education is the educator, the right kind of education begins with the educator, who must understand himself and be free from established patterns of thought'.

School social workers have an obligation to identify the specific interventions, degree of success, client satisfaction, and cost-effectiveness of their school social work practice and programs (Sabatino, Timberlake, & Mayer, as cited in Garrett, 2006). This paper analyses the perception of pre-service teacher trainees on the participation rights of children in school. The results of the paper helps school social workers and in framing curriculum revision in Diploma in Teacher Education (D.T.Ed).

### Why Children need Protection

Child Protection: Handbook for Teachers (2006) outlined the following as why children need special attention viz

1. Children are more vulnerable than adults to the conditions under which they live.
2. Hence, they are more affected than any other age group by the actions and inaction of governments and society.
3. In most societies, including ours, views persist that children are their parents' property, or are adults in the making, or are not yet ready to contribute to society.
4. Children are not seen as people who have a mind of their own, a view to express, the capacity to make a choice and an ability to decide.
5. Instead of being guided by adults, their life is decided by adults.
6. Children have no votes or political influence and little economic power. Too often, their voices are not heard.
7. Children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

### Review of Literature

Kop & Tuncel (2010) study on child rights perception of social studies teachers in Turkey found that 90% of the teachers opine children must express their opinions about the issues related with them. In the context of the Childs' private life, 80% of the teacher's state that, this private life must have a framework which is drawn with the guidance of the adults and 20% of them explained their uncertainty about this issue. Seventy per cent of the teachers said that the school discipline does not give value to children as a human and it is not appropriate with the child rights.

Kulynych (2001) reported that teachers believed that if children learn they have rights, students will run amok and chaos will ensue. Some teachers believe that it is inappropriate to politicize children by teaching them that they are citizens with rights.

Mingat & Winter (2002) asserted that Human capital (education and skills) as a critical weapon in the war against poverty and said better-educated workforces as a necessary condition for reducing poverty. Investments in primary education have been shown to reap higher returns-estimates range from 11% to more than 30%, than investments in physical capital. Investment in the education of girls yields especially high returns.

UNICEF India (cited in Ejeh & Akinola, 2009) stated that children and young people have the right to participate in family decisions, in school, class decisions and in faith communities.

### Materials & Methods

The study is descriptive in nature (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004), simple random sampling (n = 72) and self-prepared self-completion questionnaire is used to collect the data from pre-service teacher trainees in Cuddalore district. The power of the test is kept at 0.95, level of significance ( $\alpha$ ) at 0.05 and effect size (d) as 0.6 for the selection of sample size. The statements are given six ratings. Along with the five responses another response 'unwilling to answer' is also given, so that respondents 'self-determination' (Alston & Bowels, 2003) is respected and valued. Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 is used to analyse the data. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Field, 2009) is conducted to test the normality of data and the test variables confirmed normality at significance level 0.05, hence parametric tests are applied to the data set.

### Findings

1. In the study of perception on participation, 18% (n =13) is low, 68% (n = 49) is medium and 14% (n = 10) is high perception on the rights of child (participation). The values of the responses are given in the above table no 1.
2. 95.8% (n = 69) of the respondents have completed twelfth standard and only 2.7% (n=2) have completed degree and

- then joined pre-service teacher training i.e DTEd
3. 91.7% (n = 66) of the respondents have not attended training on Right of Children to free and compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act, 2009). Only 2.7% (n = 2) have attended training on RTE Act, 2009
  4. Only 6.35% of the participants said the child's age is 6 to 14 [which is according to RTE Act, 2009].
  5. Independent sample t-test is conducted to test the hypotheses. The results are as follows
    - a. Knowing RTE Act, 2009 and participant's perception in child right (participation) are **not** significant. CI [-0.517, 3.485],  $t(70) = 1.479$ ,  $p = 0.144$ .
    - b. The difference between gender and participant's perception in child right (participation) are **not** significant. CI [-2.745, 2.668],  $t(70) = -0.029$ ,  $p = 0.977$ .
    - c. Attending child rights training and participant's perception in child right (participation) are **not** significant. CI [-4.181, 3.179],  $t(70) = -.272$ ,  $p = 0.787$ .

### Conclusion

In the hypotheses testing, all the null hypotheses are accepted. This is because the pre-service teacher trainees have not attended any training programmes on RTE Act, 2009 and Child Rights Training. The respondent's perception is based on their experiences and not because of attending any training. The findings of the study confirms the views of Kop & Tuncel (2010), but not confirms Kulynych (2001). In this study the participants viewed that children should know their rights. The study urges for special training on RTE Act, 2009 and Child rights training for pre-service teacher trainees.

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