

*Participation*
**The Ladder of Participation: Trying to be honest!**

The sociologist Roger Hart wrote a book called *Children's Participation: The Theory And Practice Of Involving Young Citizens In Community Development And Environmental Care* for UNICEF in 1997. This approach put the work of young people and adult allies around the world in the context of a global movement for participation. It offers you, your teachers and the parents an amazing possibility: to be honest about how we integrate children and youth into decision making processes. Too often, children on a stage, during a meeting in an event, and even in a theatrical play are treated as mere decoration, or minorities are integrated as tokens to make us feel better. (<http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm>)

Students come up with a need or a plan. They convince adults to support and or finance. Together they decide and realize.

8

Student-initiated. The decisions are shared with adults.

Students have an idea and voice it. They take the initiative and bring their plans to a result.

7

Student-initiated and directed.

A new school yard is planned. Students are not only consulted but can also decide on some of the details.

6

Adult-initiated. The decisions are shared with students.

Before a decision is taken, adults consult with students. Their opinion and proposal are taken into consideration.

5

Students are consulted and informed.

A task (for instance community work) is given to students with no choice to agree or disagree. But they are informed and know the cause.

4

Students are assigned but informed.

A selected group of students (maybe a minority) is given a possibility to represent 'their cause' without having a say, without preparation. They serve to show political correctness.

3

Tokenism: Symbolic integration (of minorities).

Students are prepared to appear maybe in costumes carrying flowers or flags. They make an adult event (even a children's rights day) look nice or student friendly.

2

Decoration: Students are used.

Students are part of a political event. They might carry placards with paroles. They wear the colours of a party or a movement.

1

Manipulation: Students are misused.

