

Pathways to Participation: Children's Rights and Children's Citizenship



If burning and logging increase, the water disappears.

Harry Shier

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Overview

1. The experiential learning cycle – a Nicaraguan focus
2. The origins of the "Pathways to Participation" model
3. "Pathways to participation" today: Empowerment and active citizenship

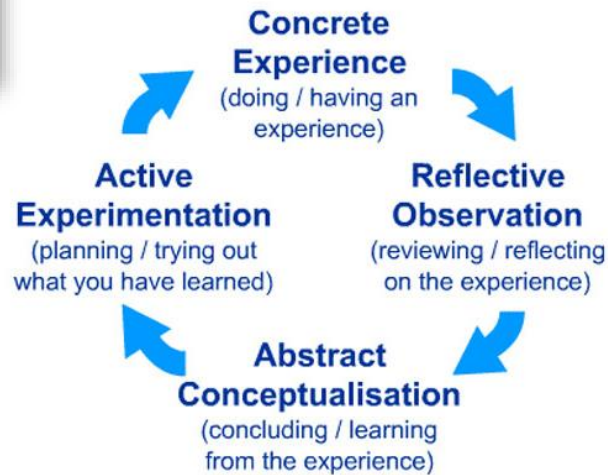


Photos by CESESMA, featuring children and young people as active citizens in Nicaragua, 2007-2015, taken with informed consent of the young people featured, and reproduced here with their permission.

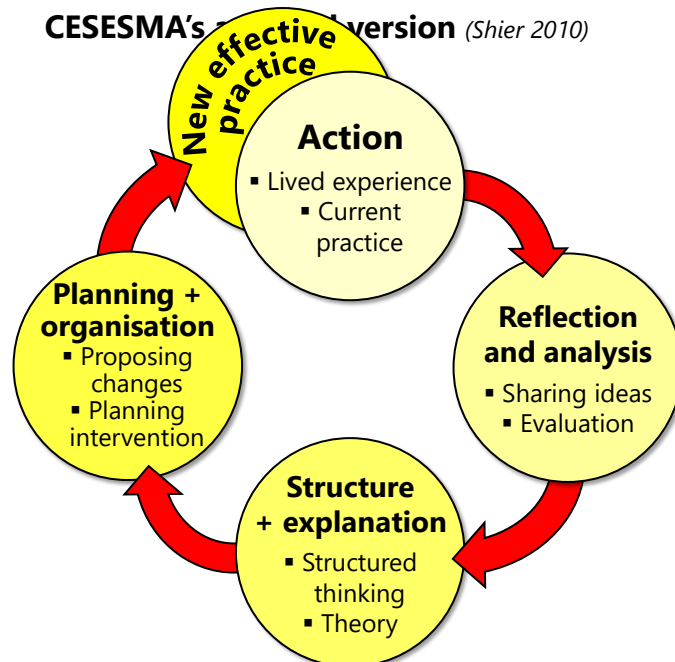
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David Kolb's original experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984)



CESESMA's version (Shier 2010)



2. The origins of the "Pathways to Participation" model



My first publication: "Adventure Playgrounds, an Introduction". 1984.

I started my career in the 1970s, working on Adventure playgrounds in the UK.

Then I 'discovered' children's rights at the 'World Play Summit' in Melbourne in 1993

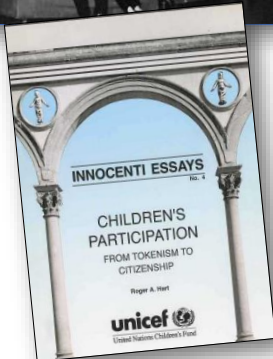


This experience changed the course of my life.

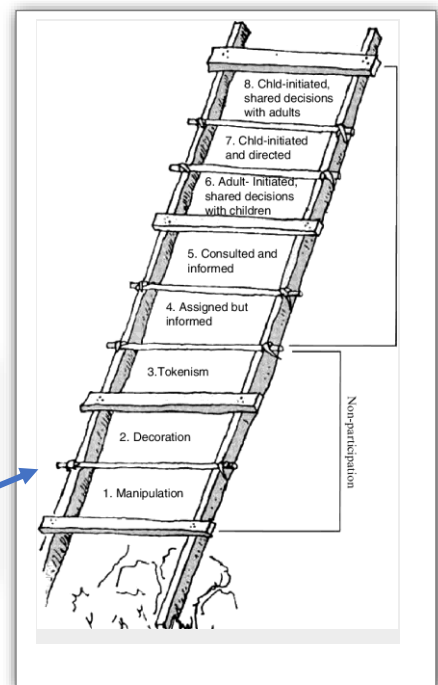
I discovered that, whatever issue you are concerned about, children's rights provides both an underpinning framework and an overarching approach – which I have been committed to ever since



On my return to the UK I formed an action committee to organise the first Article 31 Conference



Roger Hart came and introduced us to his Ladder



The Article 31 Conference led to the **Article 31 Action Pack**



[Shier (ed) 1995]

Then the launch of the **Article 31 Action Network**



Then in 1997, the **Article 31 Children's Consultancy Scheme**

There was a fashion for making programmes and institutions "child-friendly", particularly in the arts, culture and recreation sectors. "Expert advice" was being sought.

So where do we find the experts?



Children are experts on what is child-friendly and what isn't, what works for children and what doesn't, what's fun and what's boring, what makes them feel included and what makes them feel excluded. (Shier, 1999)

1998



Child consultants advising the management of the new Manchester City Art Gallery on how to create a child-friendly gallery.



1999

Child consultants commissioned by the British Waterways Board to research the educational and recreational potential of the English canal network.



2000



Child Consultants advise managers at the Tower of London on how to make it less boring.



Emergence of a new analysis

Five levels of participation



1. Children are listened to.
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.
3. Children's views are taken into account.
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes.
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.

As the work progressed, I sought to understand how adults interact with child citizens in these situations.

At the turn of the Millennium, my new model emerged

Three stages of commitment at each level

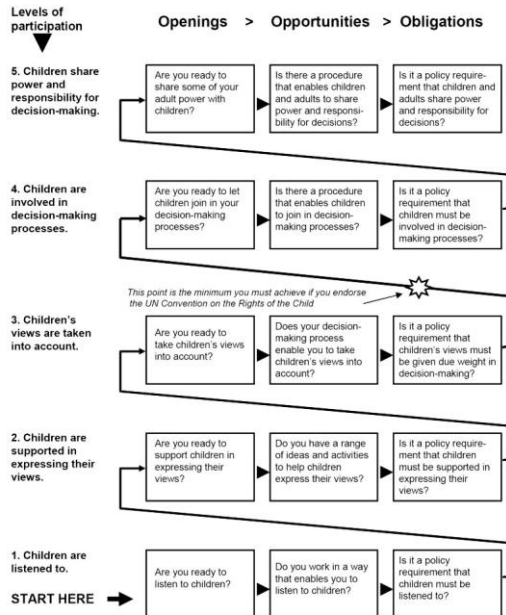


Openings >	Opportunities >	Obligations
An opening occurs when you or your team are ready and willing to work at this level	An opportunity occurs when you have the skills and resources to be able to work at this level	An obligation is established when the organisation's agreed policy requires you to work at this level



Shier, H (2001). Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations. *Children & Society*, 15: 107-117

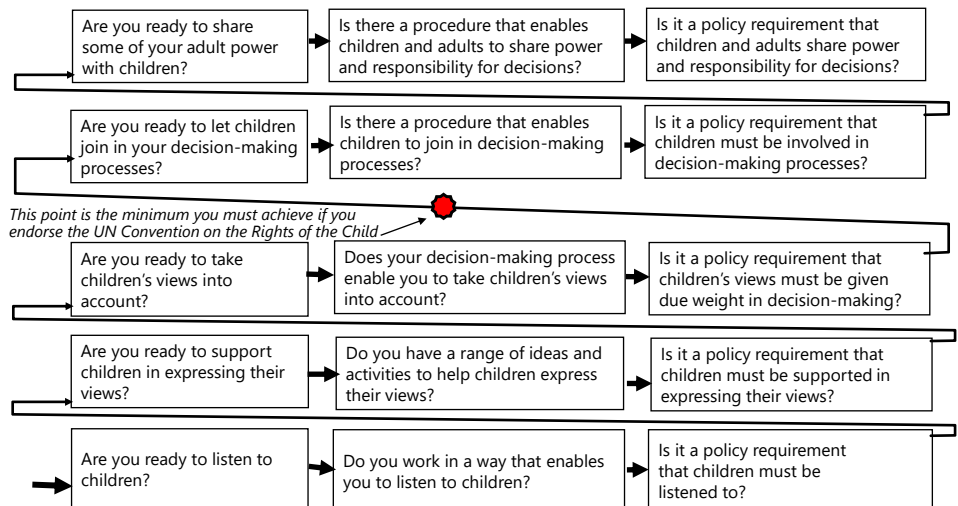
Pathways to Participation
Harry Shier 2001



Openings > Opportunities > Obligations

Levels of participation

5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes.
3. Children's views are taken into account.
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.
- START HERE**
1. Children are listened to.



“Pathways to Participation” was published in the UK over 20 years ago, in April 2001.

Today it is one of the most widely used tools for analysing and enhancing children's participation, in academic study, policy and practice, throughout the world.



In 2001, the same year that “Pathways to Participation” was published in the UK, I moved to Nicaragua, Central America



Child labour on coffee plantations



The struggle for the right to education

A new approach to participation: "Protagonismo Infantil"



Children and young people organise, advocate, take the initiative.

(Shier 2019a; Taft 2019)

I lived and worked in Nicaragua from 2001 to 2012, when I eventually returned to Ireland.

I've had over 20 years to reflect on the original "Pathways to Participation" model.

The model still works, and continues to be widely used around the world, but there are some new things we have learnt:

1. Why do we need a ladder?

The purpose of a ladder is not to climb to the top. We use a ladder to help us work at the correct height for the task in hand (and without the ladder, we cannot do this). (Shier, 2006)



2. Empowerment

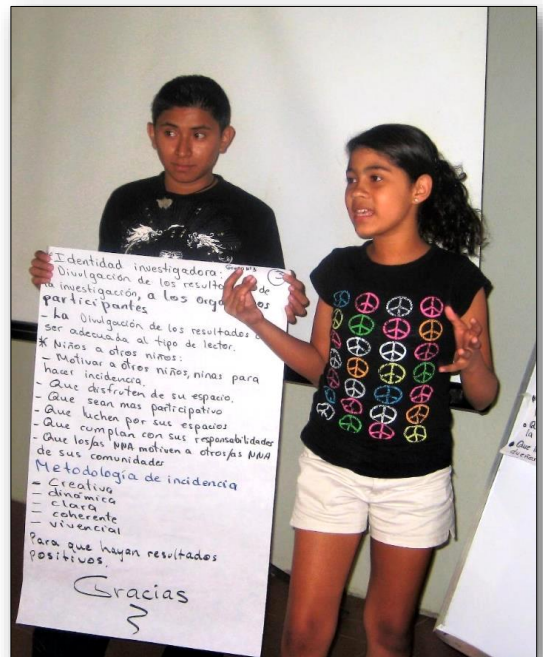
When I first created the "Pathways to Participation" model, I didn't understand "empowerment".

"Pathways to Participation" supposes that I can empower you by making you a gift of some of my power...

... and that power is a "zero-sum game": I have more – you have less.

But that's not how it is. My work in CESESMA, based on Paolo Freire's ideas, taught me that I cannot empower anyone. (Freire, 1972)

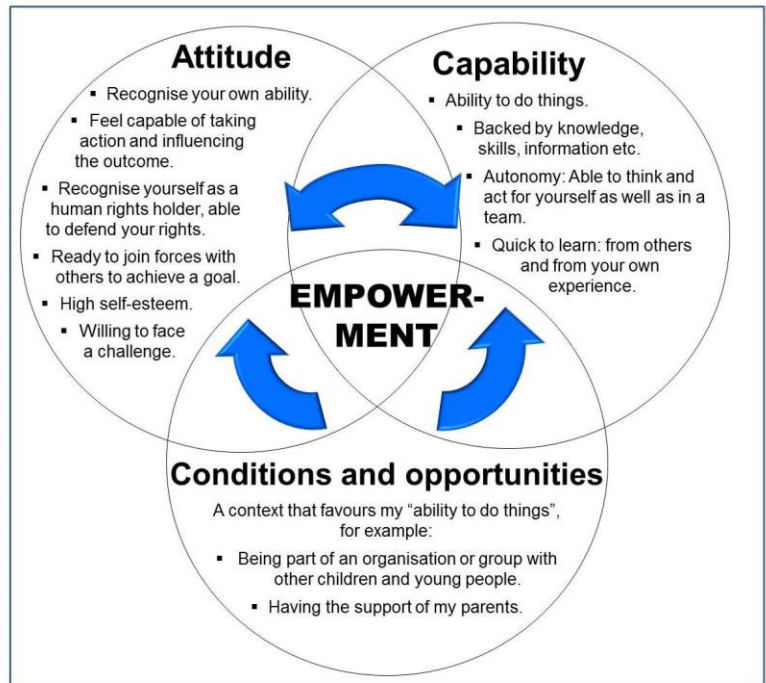
Now I understand empowerment very differently.



Here is CESESMA's model of Empowerment



(first appeared in Spanish, CESESMA-UNN, 2010). English version in Shier, 2019b).



3. Children and young people's citizenship:

This is a contested area in Nicaragua as the Constitution states that those aged 16 and over are Nicaraguan citizens with the right to vote, implying that those under 16 are not.





Responding to this anomaly, the CESESMA team proposed a concept of 'active citizenship', which recognises the person who assumes the role and responsibilities of an active citizen.

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In this sense, children and young people, through their active participation in the community, establish their identity as citizens, deserving and, if necessary, demanding, that their citizenship be recognised and respected.

(Shier et al, 2014)





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All works by Shier are available at www.harryshier.net

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