

# A Conceptual Paper: The Role of Early Childhood Education Educators in Fostering Participation and Engagement among Preschoolers in Malaysia

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## Abstract

Empowerment of children's abilities through participation in various programs, organizations, activities, and events implemented at school can increase children's maturity in expressing creative ideas for them to grow. In line with that, the present paper addresses following research question: *What strategies can be employed to effectively for educators to facilitate participation of preschoolers within the classroom setting?* This paper aims to investigate the significance of early childhood education (ECE) educators in fostering the value of participation among preschoolers, and its consequential impact on the quality of learning environment, interpersonal connections, and overall health and well-being outcomes. This study will additionally explore the potential impact of educators on children's educational objectives through their guidance of learning activities during participation in classroom settings. The socio-cultural theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) is employed to investigate the developmental processes of children, wherein their relationships with peers and educators, coupled with participation in activities, play a crucial role.

**Keywords:** Participation, Kindergarten Children, Early Childhood Education Educator

## Introduction

Every child has the right to fulfil their fundamental rights. Participation in kindergarten-organized activities is one of their basic necessities. Children must be exposed to a variety of activities from an early age because they will be the successors to the country's future leadership. The Department of Statistics Malaysia in 2022 published a policy that states that there are 9.19 million children in Malaysia, or 28.1 percent of Malaysia's 32.65 million total population (The Star, 2022). From this factual statistic, it can be concluded that children are an important asset for the country's progress in the future. This can be supported by the statement outlined by Salleh and Ibrahim (2015) where they consider children are without a

doubt the most valuable national assets, according to the forecasts, as they will carry out every undertaking and objectives set forth by the government. To cultivate the necessary qualities for future leadership among children, it is imperative that multiple stakeholders, particularly early childhood education (ECE) educators, assume a significant role in instilling a sense of curiosity, risk-taking, productivity, and resilience in Malaysian children.

To prioritise the significance of these concerns on a daily basis, it is imperative to redefine the role of the ECE educator. Rather than solely imparting knowledge on basic literacy and numeracy skills, the ECE educator should assume the responsibility of guiding preschoolers towards independence by actively engaging them in various classroom initiatives, ceremonies, programmes, and activities. This assertion is substantiated by Galajda's (2012) observations, wherein she highlights the shift away from the educator as the primary figure in the learning process. Instead, learning becomes a collaborative endeavor, with all classroom participants contributing to the creation of a conducive and amicable learning environment. Therefore, it is imperative for educators to assume the position of a catalyst and guide for their students, fostering a climate that promotes constructive and adaptable discourse, offering information as necessary, and exemplifying desirable behaviour for the individuals comprising the group (Rahman, 2005). A recently conducted study has unveiled that educators' competencies exert a substantial impact on pupils' behavior, as indicated by the study's findings. This finding suggests that the instructor has been highly successful in influencing students' character development as a means of mitigating disciplinary infractions among the student body (Jantan & Piaw, 2017).

When engaging in a discourse on the participation of children in kindergarten or any other early childhood education facility, it is imperative to acknowledge that each educator possesses their own unique perspective on the matter. One instance of participation in the classroom occurs when the educator engages in decision-making regarding classroom rules and activities in collaboration with the children (Akyol & Erdem, 2021). This demonstrates that the participation of children extends beyond merely empowering them to make independent decisions without adult assistance. Instead, it emphasises the role of the educator in facilitating collaborative decision-making among children during various activities. Additional clarification regarding the veracity of a child's participation, particularly in relation to the educator-child dynamic, can be elucidated by referencing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This international convention outlines a child's entitlement to participate, encompassing the liberty to articulate their viewpoints, the entitlement to assemble with peers, the prerogative to establish associations, and the right to demand that their perspectives be duly considered in all matters that impact them (Lansdown, 2011). The comment raises an intriguing argument regarding the entitlement to assemble in the company of others. In the educational setting, it is imperative to acknowledge that children possess the legal entitlement to freely articulate their preferences and dislikes, thereby precluding any attempts to stifle their voices.

According to the National Education Philosophy, also known as Falsafah Pendidikan Kebangsaan (FPK), the holistic development of students, including those in kindergarten and preschool, is emphasised. This development is categorised into four key areas, namely physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual development (Tayeb & Awang, 2022). To facilitate the attainment of these four objectives through the participation of students in the

classroom, it is imperative for educators to undertake the incorporation of diverse extracurricular and cocurricular activities inside the school setting. This assertion is substantiated by Padhi's (2021) remark, whereby it is posited that participation in co-curricular activities facilitates the holistic development of pupils and enables them to gain the essential knowledge, skills, and attributes required for leading fulfilling and prosperous lives. Consequently, extracurricular activities significantly contribute to a student's educational experience during their enrolment in school. Furthermore, the study conducted by Shaharuddin et al (2022) revealed that participation in co-curricular activities might facilitate the acquisition of supplementary life skills among children. These skills encompass various domains such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, management, and other proficiencies that have the potential to enhance their prospects in the job market. Hence, based on the findings of these two studies, it can be concluded that early childhood education (ECE) educators have a significant impact on facilitating children's exposure to novel experiences, which in turn aids in the cultivation of their talents, potential, skills, and knowledge. This is achieved by their participation in both academic and non-academic domains, rather than solely emphasising academic subjects.

### Literature Review

#### *Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in Elevating Child Participation*

The social surroundings in which children are immersed can have a crucial role in their overall academic development. This entails facilitating the enhancement of communication and interaction between educators and learners, or among children and their peers. The role of social support is a critical feature for children to acquire to effectively engage in many activities organised within a kindergarten setting. This section will provide a comprehensive examination of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, with the aim of enhancing our understanding of the significant societal influence on children's development and participation. In Vygotsky's theoretical framework, the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is elucidated. The ZPD refers to the disparity between a child's own capabilities and their potential abilities with the assistance of others (Vygotsky, 1978). To facilitate comprehension of the theoretical explanation, reference can be made to Figure 1, depicted below.

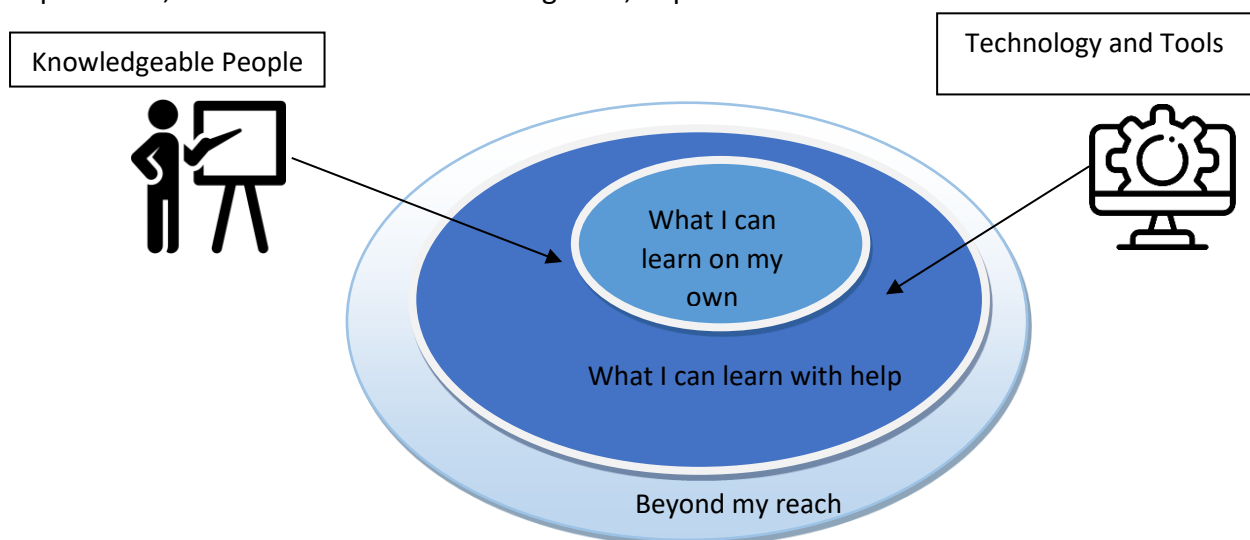


Fig. 1 ZPD The Zone of Proximal Development

Source: Vygotsky, 1978

The diagram presented on figure 1 illustrates the three tiers of educational attainment that preschoolers will acquire during their kindergarten years. The first tier pertains to the independent learning capacity of preschoolers. In the second tier, the educational environment in which individuals can acquire knowledge with the support of social aid. The third stage, there exists a level at which the acquisition of knowledge surpasses their cognitive capacities. Vygotsky reiterated the existence of a process called scaffolding, which serves to establish a connection between children's limitations and their abilities. Over the past three decades, academics and educators have extensively employed the notion of scaffolding to elucidate the ways in which adults or more experienced peers can facilitate a child's development and learning (Bochner & Duchesne, 2003; Hammond, 2002; Daniels, 2001; Stone, 1998; Krause). Several philosophers in the field of educational psychology have posited that scaffolding serves as a metaphorical representation of the assistance provided by adults or more proficient peers to children during the learning process (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Bruner, 1957). In the present setting, it is imperative for ECE educators to assume a significant role in fostering the development of children's capabilities to engage in various activities, under the provision of effective guidance. The child's scaffolding process is contingent upon the successful reception of advice, and conversely, ineffective reception of guidance may hinder the scaffolding process.

Hence, within the educational setting, it is imperative for ECE educators to possess a comprehensive understanding of the most effective strategies for fostering children's participation in diverse activities or organisations inside the school environment. In addition to serving as a mediator to enhance children's proficiency in utilising scaffolding techniques, the role of peers emerges as a prominent mediator in fostering children's participation in diverse activities within the kindergarten setting. In the study conducted by Martinot et al. (2022), it was shown that peers and educators are widely regarded as the most effective providers of social support in promoting school participation, regardless of the socio-economic background of the students. To comprehend the impact of educators and peers on enhancing children's participation in kindergarten, Ge and Er (2005) have developed a framework, depicted in the figure below, which serves as a reference for early childhood education (ECE) educators. This framework provides guidance for promoting children's participation in both structured and unstructured activities, while also emphasising the significance of comprehending and implementing appropriate scaffolding techniques within the kindergarten setting.

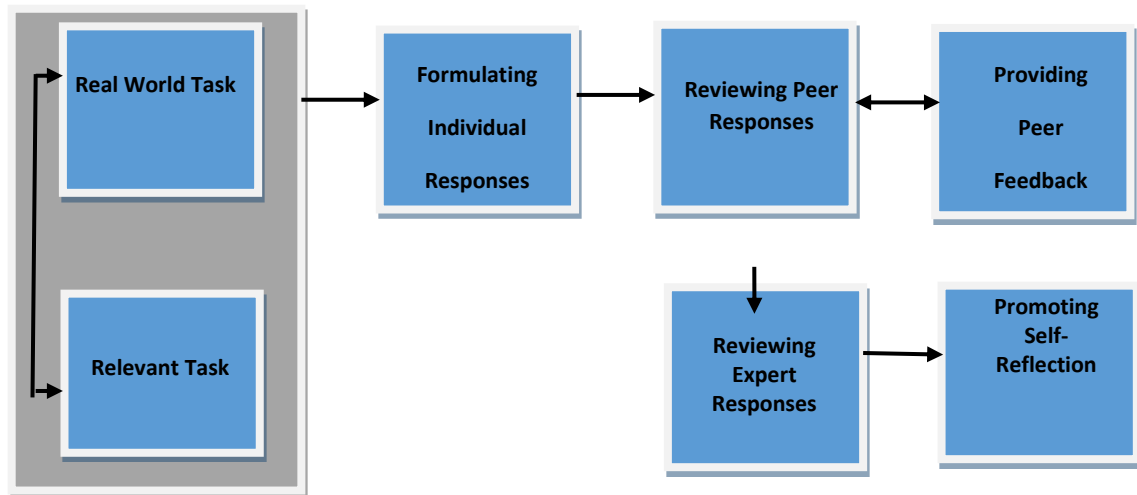


Fig. 2. Scaffolding process for Reasoning, Problem Solving, And Reflection  
Source: Adapted from Ge and Er (2005)

The provided framework outlines six (6) sequential processes that can be employed by ECE educators to effectively facilitate children's participation within the classroom. This method focuses on three (3) key domains of transformation, namely reasoning, problem solving, and reflection. First and foremost, it is imperative for educators to have a comprehensive understanding of the tasks associated with ECE. In the context of ECE, there exist two distinct categories of tasks, specifically referred to as Relevant Task and Real-World Tasks (RWT). In conceptual terms, a task can be characterised as a specific undertaking that requires completion, such as assignments given to children or scientific endeavours (Meriam-Webster, n.d.). Typically, children who are enrolled in a classroom or kindergarten setting are assigned tasks to fulfil. The assignment can be disseminated through many methods, regardless of whether it is administered during class time or outside of class. The appropriateness of tasks for a child is contingent upon the discretion of the educator. From the perspective of this paper, assignments can be defined as a set of regulations and protocols that children are required to adhere to successfully do a given task. In the context of children's participation in school, it is crucial for them to possess an understanding of the distinct responsibilities associated with various roles, such as that of a class leader, a class assistant, and an ordinary student. To facilitate the knowledge acquisition process, it is imperative for the educator to initially provide an explanation to the children, followed by the elucidation of the rules that they are required to adhere to. The job outcomes can be achieved after all individuals comprehend their respective responsibilities.

A Relevant Task refers to a task that is capable of being independently performed by children. Tasks that are deemed appropriate are often those that can be independently executed by learners without the need for direct guidance from the educator. As an illustration, to maintain discipline among the children, the instructor may instruct them to independently retrieve their own water and afterwards, after consumption, direct them to independently clean their respective cups. In essence, appropriate tasks refer to tasks that are both suitable and commensurate with the child's age. On the other hand, real-world assignments encompass activities that replicate authentic scenarios and exemplify language usage within such contexts. This activity comprises a role-play scenario in which children assume the role

of an exhibitor and engage in simulated exhibition. According to Magang (2019), within the educational setting, the RWT approach offers an opportunity for authentic and organic learning experiences. This assertion finds confirmation in Nunan's (1989) work, in which he elucidated that through the replication of authentic tasks that children could encounter in real-world contexts (e.g., placing an order at a restaurant), RWT endeavours to attain situational and interpersonal authenticity. In the context of this study, it is imperative for educators to possess a comprehensive understanding of the specific activities that can effectively foster the holistic development of children by means of participation within the kindergarten setting. According to a recent investigation conducted by Allen et al. (2022), there is a pressing need to enhance extracurricular activities to foster greater equity in the initial stages of preschoolers' educational experiences. To establish a connection with RWT, educators can organise various workshops, such as culinary workshops, which can provide students with the necessary skills for proper food preparation while also providing them with practical, experiential learning opportunities.

Proceeding to the subsequent stage, it is vital for ECE educators to possess a comprehensive comprehension of creating individualised solutions. In this stage, educators could employ diverse assessment methodologies to analyse a child's behaviours. The responsibility for supporting pedagogical decision-making and student improvement is attributed to educators in the context of classroom assessment (Black, 2014; Black & Wiliam, 2010; Zhao et al., 2017). To illustrate, educators may employ an anecdotal record as a means of evaluating the exceptional attributes or actions exhibited by a child. This method involves meticulously documenting a comprehensive descriptive narrative after watching a particular behaviour or interaction (Beaty, 1986). This document can serve as a means of identifying the reactions of children during the implementation of RWT, or Relevant Task offered by the instructor. For instance, if a child who often exhibits passive behaviour starts to develop an interest in real-world tasks (RWT) such as cooking and actively participates in related classes, the educator can document this change in attitude by including a note in the anecdotal record. In this study, the researcher has presented only one example of an evaluation approach that educators can employ to elicit a response from children exhibiting a specific behaviour. However, it is important to acknowledge that there exist other alternative assessment methods that can be utilised in such situations.

The subsequent stage entails the evaluation of peer responses. According to the University Writing Centre (2023) at Texas A&M University, peer response, alternatively referred to as peer review or critique, provides an opportunity for peers to provide comments on one other's work. The action of peer review does not solely involve the identification and correction of errors made by one's peers, and so cannot be classified as a mere proofreading exercise. The purpose of this is to offer a perspective to consider during the process of modification. To facilitate the optimal development and resilience of children, it is imperative for educators to initially watch and assess the reactions and interactions among their classmates. In the context of preschoolers participating in a cooking session, it is imperative for the instructor to observe and assess the socialisation exhibited by all the children. If the educator observes a lack of cooperation within groups, namely children's reluctance to share cooking utensils with their peers, it becomes necessary for the educator to undertake a subsequent step, namely the implementation of peer feedback. Educators can gather insights from other students regarding their disinclination to share equipment by employing the consultation approach. The term "consultation" can be defined as the act of engaging in a discourse with individuals or groups with the aim of enhancing comprehension or reaching a



resolution, or as a formal assembly convened for this purpose (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Upon receiving feedback during the consultation session, it is imperative for the educator to reassess the individual's answer and determine the appropriateness of their actions in relation to their prior participation in the cooking class.

The subsequent stage involves the evaluation of responses provided by experts. Prilop et al (2021) assert that expert replies play a crucial role in enhancing educators' classroom management skills. In the context of this ongoing research, the efficacy of a classroom session and an instructional activity implemented by the instructor is contingent upon expert insight or feedback. At times, our acts may be interpreted as forceful and assertive. However, specialists in specific fields contend that such perceptions stem from the way we personally approach, carry out, and conclude these actions. The remarks provided by these individuals hold significant value as they facilitate educators in enhancing various activities that engage children in participation within a kindergarten setting. One effective method for educator to obtain an expert perspective is to present the preschoolers with a film depicting a peer engaging in a certain action. Educators can ascertain the primary factor that precipitated the occurrence of this circumstance. Ultimately, educators and students will engage in the concluding phase of the participation procedure commonly referred to as self-reflection. According to Gläser-Zikuda (2012), introspection, alternatively referred to as self-reflection, entails the process of watching and documenting an individual's own emotions, aspirations, and cognitive processes. Metacognition is a purposeful cognitive process that encompasses the examination, contemplation, and evaluation of one's own emotions, cognitions, and concepts. Extrospection, often known as the act of seeing external phenomena, stands in contrast to introspection, which focuses on self-reflection. By following the aforementioned stages, the outcome that will be achieved pertains to the procedure by which enhanced participation will ensue when the instructor executes any programme or activity pertaining to the aforementioned subject matter. Furthermore, this approach can be extended to various other subject matters as well. To provide further elucidation, reference can be made to Figure 3 depicted below

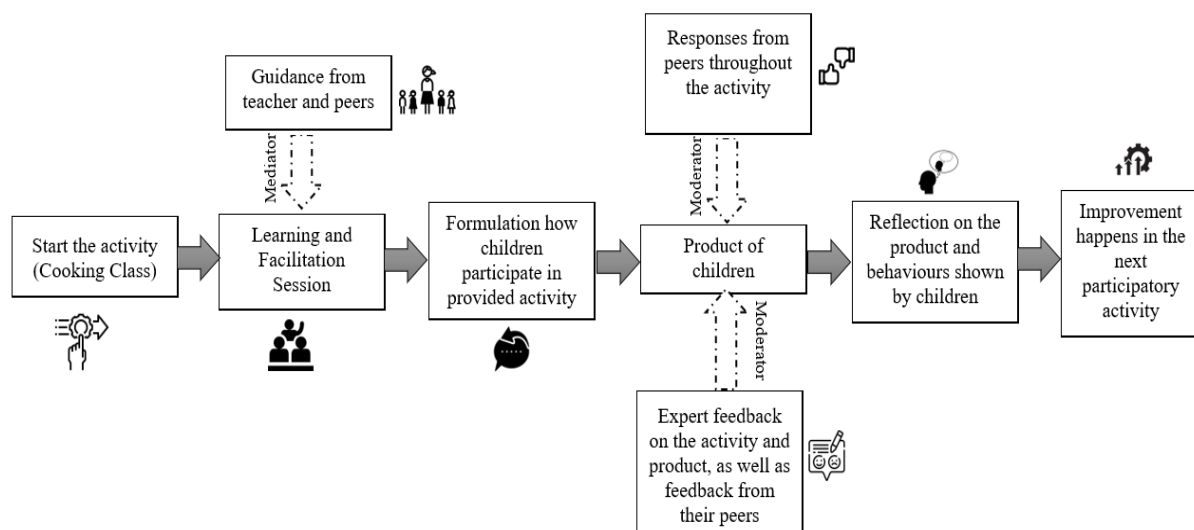


Fig. 3. Participation in a Kindergarten Cooking Workshop Adapted from Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory and the Scaffolding Process Framework  
Source: Adapted from Ge and Er (2005)

*Applying Model of Child Participation in the Classroom using Lundy Model of Meaningful Child Participation*

Fig. 4 The Lundy Model of Child Participation

Source: Lundy (2007)

Figure 4 depicts a paradigm of meaningful child participation presented by Lundy (2007). There exist four significant components that pertain to the participation of children namely Space, Voice, Audience and Influence. The first crucial criterion for fostering children's participation in school is the provision of a conducive environment (Space) that promotes inclusivity and offers ample opportunities for them to articulate their thoughts and perspectives. According to Alme and Reime (2021), it is imperative to comprehend the ways in which preschoolers can exercise their right to participate in diverse environmental and educational contexts to promote and facilitate pedagogical practises on a worldwide scale. Rivlin (1990) concurs that the establishment of relationships between individuals and physical environments necessitates a considerable amount of time, yet remains crucial for fostering a sense of stability, attentiveness, and empathy within a given context. Furthermore, Nitecki and Chun (2016) posited that when examining childhood education, it is imperative to consider two distinct categories of spaces: the physical and social milieu encompassing the children, as well as the imaginative and developmental realm intrinsic to the children. Upon initial examination, what factors contribute to the significance of space in a child's developmental process? The development of children's autonomy may be hindered if their educator fails to offer them opportunities to voice their thoughts through various educational activities, play sessions, school organisations, or classroom programmes. Providing preschoolers with the opportunity to engage in an activity, despite the possibility of failure, contributes to the development of enhanced motivation and self-confidence. Additionally, the provision of inclusive opportunities is of paramount importance in facilitating participation of children within the classroom, regardless of whether they are engaged in academic studies or participating in extracurricular activities. Nevertheless, the objective of the educator to empower children through engaging them in participation activities may inadvertently result in a perception of them being constrained by the activity, so limiting their autonomy in decision-making. The assertion made by Hultgren and Johansson (2019) suggests that prioritising participatory activities over fundamental decision making allows for the inclusion of preschoolers who may not possess the cognitive capacities necessary to fully



exercise their rights to participation. Hence, it is imperative for educators to assume the responsibility of fostering motivation among children, enabling them to actively engage in decision-making processes pertaining to the implementation of participatory activities.

One fundamental aspect is the right to express their opinions and perspectives (Voice). The realisation of justice and respect for children can be achieved in diverse settings throughout different countries. As per the stipulations outlined in Article 12 of UNCRC, it is incumbent upon governments to ensure the protection, promotion, and advancement of children's entitlement to engage in decision-making processes that will bear consequences on their lives (Council of Europe, 2023). According to the Department of Social Welfare (2016), the fourth aim of the Malaysia National Policy on Children (2009) highlights the significance of recognising the capacity of every child to form their own opinions and their entitlement to voice those opinions on matters that directly affect them. Hence, it is imperative for educators to possess a comprehensive understanding of the most effective approach to uphold children's entitlement to express themselves without encountering bias or discrimination, regardless of the medium via which their ideas are conveyed, be it verbal or non-verbal. It is noteworthy that, as stated by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2023), ECE educators are required to possess an understanding of how to appropriately acknowledge and value the perspectives of children throughout both play and educational activities. The passage asserts that within the realm of ECE and other matters affecting children, educators ought to give precedence to the rights of children by actively advocating for their interests. Hence, it is imperative for educators in kindergartens, preschools, and other early childhood education settings to demonstrate heightened sensitivity in facilitating occasions for children to engage in both educational and recreational activities. In the context of education, it is important for educators to acknowledge the significance of playtime for children, rather than exclusively subjecting them to prolonged periods of academic engagement during learning and facilitating sessions. In essence, it is important to acknowledge that comprehending the complexity surrounding a child's entitlement to express their views does not imply that endeavours to emphasise the necessity of affording the child's perspectives appropriate regard should be disregarded (Archard & Uniacke, 2021). It is imperative to acknowledge and consider the perspectives of children about matters that directly affect them. However, it is insufficient to solely listen to their comments without implementing any corresponding measures or initiatives.

One crucial factor contributing to the enhancement of children's participation in the classroom is the availability of adults who really listens to them (Audience). For children to effectively articulate their perspectives, it is imperative that they have access to an audience. When children have the freedom to express their thoughts and the opportunity to voice those views, the next process that can aid in their active engagement is communication with the audience in their environment. The Dictionary of Modern Journalism provides a conceptual definition of "audience" as the individual or group that receives information during the process of information exchange. This term encompasses the general categories of readers, listeners, or viewers (Gan et al., 1993). Operationally, the term audience refers to a group or individual who listens to the children when they express their opinions on something, and the audience must also reply to the ideas given by the children (QUT Education, n.d.). The presence of an audience for children enhances the significance and genuineness of the learning process. Not only does it provide children the ability to express themselves, but it also enhances their emotional well-being by fostering a sense of validation from their social environment. In instances where children engage in any activities at school and successfully

produce a tangible outcome, it is imperative for educators to afford them the chance to present that product to their peers. Subsequently, the educator should request the participation of other children to attend the forthcoming presentation by the child. Consequently, the individuals' sense of being acknowledged and esteemed will be cultivated, thereby facilitating their participation in future endeavours. To enhance the level of classroom participation, it is imperative for educators to refine their role in inspiring students to provide comments during presentations. According to the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Oxford (2023), the act of children assessing and providing commentary on each other's work or performance is commonly referred to as peer feedback. Children are afforded the opportunity to explore and examine these established standards and prerequisites within the framework of a specific activity through their participation in peer feedback, utilising the relevant assessment criteria. This will facilitate the participation of children, so enhancing their social aptitude and the calibre of their interpersonal relationships. The authors Wang et al (2019) underscored the importance of a child's ability to establish harmonious connections with their peers and proposed that friendship plays a role in the social skill development of children, while also providing companionship.

Last but not least, the availability of processes for incorporating children in decision-making and feedback mechanisms (Influenced) to children regarding the process of making a decision related to the fulfilment of their rights is one of the key tenets of children's participation. But surprisingly, implementing a child's right to participate presents a number of challenges, one of which is making sure that adults do more than just listen to children; rather, they must take children's opinions seriously and be willing to be affected by them (Lundy, 2007). Interestingly, according to Kennan et al (2018), the data showed that children and youth influenced decisions about their care, protection, and welfare in all areas, such as when a new social worker was requested, access arrangements were made, care plans were created, plans were made to address school absences, and behaviour and daily routines of the child or young person in care were managed. Based on this current study, the concept of influence can be defined as the capacity to effectively persuade individuals to adopt favourable attitudes or habits, or to successfully achieve specified objectives. The capacity of a leader to exert influence on individuals is a crucial skill to possess. Ahmad (2022) posits that those who exhibit influence demonstrate the ability to effectively achieve a specific goal, apply discernment, and motivate and inspire others to replicate their behaviours. Educators have the obligation of ensuring that children's ideas are duly acknowledged and given appropriate consideration, to facilitate their participation in the different activities, regulations, and initiatives undertaken within the school environment. There are various efforts that can be done in taking actions against what children voice. For example, if they ask the teacher to do an investigation on an animal like a cat, the teacher can consider the request. Although the teacher does not take them to the cat shops, but the teacher can bring them into the classroom and then carry out an investigation on the cat. At the end of the process, the active participation of children will occur. Stafford (2021) asserts that since children are knowledgeable agents with opinions that can enhance their experience, so it is crucial to pay attention to and act upon their opinions. So in kindergarten, it is important for educators to take action on what the children express because through this way, they will empower themselves to engage in an activity while also motivating them to feel appreciated.

Summarily, participation of children in the classroom is essential, as it positively impacts the efficacy of learning through increased participation and interaction between students and instructors (Rohi & Muslim, 2023). The ability of educators to promote student participation,

encourage participation in activities, and effectively implement educational programmes is crucial for creating a healthy classroom environment. Ghalley and Rai (2019) believe that the rationale behind this phenomenon lies in the dynamic nature of the learning process, which requires the establishment of effective communication channels between educators and students. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that peers hold a significant position within the educational environment as they facilitate the participation of children in the classroom. Based on the research conducted by Bakalm and Taşdelen-Karçkay (2016), it has been determined that peer social support is significant in offering emotional comfort to children, shielding them from feelings of worry and stress, and aiding them in effectively addressing challenges by means of advice and constructive criticism. Bursal (2017) posits that a positive correlation can be observed between peer social support and a range of desirable outcomes, such as enhanced motivation, improved concentration, good academic attitudes, and increased academic achievement in children. Hence, in this specific context, the participation of educators and peers in moulding children's participation is of great importance in facilitating their holistic development.

### **Discussion of Study Findings**

RQ: What strategies can be employed to effectively for educators to facilitate participation of preschoolers within the classroom setting?

The educator's position holds significant importance in establishing objectives pertaining to children's participation in diverse programmes or activities that are intended for implementation. The absence of educator encouragement to engage in academic, co-curricular, or extracurricular activities pertaining to early childhood development may hinder participation in kindergarten or any early childhood education centre. To effectively implement participation activities in the classroom, educators must possess a comprehensive understanding of their audience (preschoolers). According to York (2014) of the Centre for Education Policy Analysis at Stanford University, it is essential for educators to possess an understanding of the unique abilities that each child possesses to effectively tailor instruction to their individual learning needs. This can be achieved through the deliberate planning and implementation of activities in the classroom. As depicted in the diagram provided, instructors have the capacity to discern three distinct categories of classroom audiences.

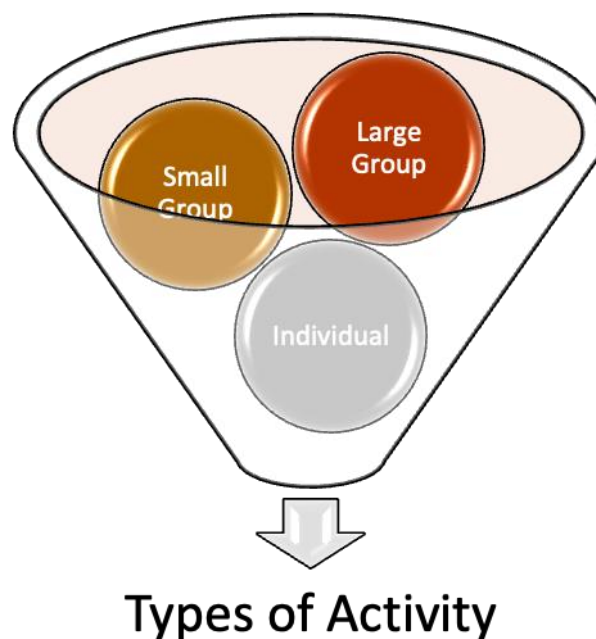


Fig. 5 Types of Activity for Child Participation

Source: Queen's University (n.d.)

Initially, educators have the capacity to incorporate activities that are based around large groups within the confines of the classroom or beyond its boundaries. Indeed, there has been an increase in the prevalence of large-group activities within the education sector since the year 2000. Researchers were able to exert a positive influence on children's learning outcomes, irrespective of their quantity, by effectively identifying enabling qualities (Jerez et al., 2019). According to Siegal's (2005) study, the implementation and integration of cooperative learning, which involves group activities, has the potential to enhance both academic achievement and the development of social skills among students. On the contrary, as stated by Burke (2011), there exist six potential benefits that individuals can get when engaged in group work. These advantages can be delineated as follows:

- i. A group of children has more information than a single person.
- ii. Groups foster creativity.
- iii. Children recall group discussions more vividly.
- iv. Children-led decisions result in greater satisfaction.
- v. Children obtain a greater grasp of their own personalities.
- vi. Organization places a great priority on collaboration.

The implementation of activities in a group yields numerous advantages. Nevertheless, the execution of participation activities lacks proper planning and implementation, hence posing a significant challenge for educators and students alike. In addition to engaging in large-group activities, the incorporation of small-group activities has been shown to enhance the overall effectiveness of learning across different contexts (Cottell & Millis, 1994). Harris and Watson (1997) have provided evidence for the notion that including small group activities within the educational context not only enhances students' acquisition of knowledge, but also enhances their self-assurance and proficiency as individuals capable of resolving complex problems. In addition, engaging in small-group activities, such as discussions, has the potential to foster the generation of ideas and facilitate the resolution of various challenges. Various educational

institutions have adopted the effective pedagogical approach of small group teaching, resulting in the attainment of targeted educational outcomes (Meo, 2013). To facilitate optimal concentration and participation among students, educators must be equipped to implement small group activities. This is because engaging in this activity allows for the identification of both the strengths and limitations of everyone within the group. Consequently, this information can be utilised by the educator to strategically plan and implement improvements in subsequent activity sessions. The primary responsibility of the educator is to group children according to their similar or disparate levels of development. The determination of the appropriate course of action is contingent upon the specific goals and objectives of the proposed undertaking.

The third instructional activity that may be devised by the educator within the classroom setting pertains to a participation-based exercise that focuses on the individual's personal growth and development. The implementation of activities on an individual basis highlights the significance of including children's diversity into the planning process. Every child engages in independent learning and is provided with support as required. Children will engage in educational activities based on their individual capabilities. Schedules and assignments are implemented to ensure a continual learning experience for these children. The design of teaching should be oriented towards facilitating the acquisition of knowledge or the creation of something that will yield personal benefits for the student. This is when the influence of individual activity becomes apparent (Alsagoff, 1981). Engaging in individual activities offers distinct benefits. According to a study conducted by Kaweera et al (2019), engaging in solitary activities has been found to be beneficial for students. The study findings indicate that while a minority of participants expressed difficulty in engaging in the individual activity, most participants reported perceiving a favourable influence. Hence, to foster participation among children in the classroom, educators must have a comprehensive understanding of the most effective strategies for developing individualised activities. The optimal growth and development of children can be facilitated by educators who possess the ability to personally manage each child through the implementation of engaging activities or programmes. In relation to this matter, the programme or activity implemented by the educator can serve as a prototype for other educators to adopt comparable programmes or activities in their instructional settings. In brief, a variety of child participation activities can be implemented in different settings, including large-group, small-group, and individual contexts. These activities, referred to as suggested activities according to the guidelines advocated by Campbellsville University (2019), have been supported by previous studies as indicated in the table provided.

Table 1

*Large-Group, Small-Group, and Individual Activity that Can Be Promote for Child's Participation in Classroom*

No.	Type	Activity	Indication	Step
1	Large-Group Activity	Response Card (Dinion, Toste, and Joseph, 2020)	Response cards can be used in many different courses and enable all pupils to speak up without talking over one another.	Introduce a topic to children. Give two cards for each of them - red card for wrong answers or green card for correct answers. Educator can make puzzles related to the topic. Ask them to give answers by showing the correct card.
2	Small-Group Activity	Gallery Walk (Makmum, Yin, & Zakariya, 2020)	A discussion technique called Gallery Walk encourages children to get up from their seats and participate actively.	Children are separated up into small groups. Depending on the demands of the educator, each group will be assigned a different or identical task. Children are invited to discuss in groups and then write their responses on mahjong paper. All groups must paste their mahjong paper in a visible location. Everyone will take part in explaining the outcomes of their group's work. Each group will then move and observe the results of the other group. Educator must ensure that there is a sharing/question-and-answer session between the visiting group and the group representative.
3	Individual Activity	Reflection in Learning (Chang, 2019).	Making an A-Z topic summary also assists educator in understanding what children have learned from a book or lesson module. This is one of the best reflections that educator can do in the classroom.	For each letter of the alphabet, educator instructs the students to write a word or sentence summarising what they've learned. To make this assignment easier, use an A-Z worksheet. Give them only a few letters to summarise. If desired, allow children to share their words or summary for each letter with the class.

Furthermore, there are certain ideal self-management activities that are distinct from typical self-management activities to encourage children to participate in class management. To understand how this task can be carried out, refer to the table below:



Table 2

*The Differences between Typical Participation and Participation in Class Management at Kindergarten*

No.	Item	Differences	
		Typical Participation	Participation
1	Cleaning the toilet	Educators or general workers will clean the toilets in the kindergarten.	Children help to clean up the toilet either with or without educator guidance.
2.	Eating time	Children will leave glasses and plates on the table, or they will put them in the basket provided.	Children help washing their plates and glasses that have been used in groups where there is a special schedule made for the division of this task.
3.	Cleaning the classroom	The educator or general worker will clean the classroom every day.	Children have their own schedule to carry out their respective tasks every day.
4.	Class instructions	Educators will perform class routines with the children such as singing the national anthem, reading prayers, and chanting words of encouragement.	Educators can encourage children to lead the activities of singing the national anthem, reading prayers, and giving words of encouragement.

Based on the information provided in the Table 2, it can be inferred that the participation of children in decision-making processes within the kindergarten setting holds significant importance for their overall development. According to the curricular activities outlined in Table 1, the participation of children can have a positive impact on their whole development, encompassing physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. The assertion made by Wade (1994) lends support to the notion that active participation in classroom discussions can provide several advantages for children. These benefits include the enjoyment derived from engaging in the exchange of ideas with peers, as well as enhanced learning outcomes. Learning takes place when there is a strong connection and active participation between educators and children throughout learning activities. Furthermore, Table 2 illustrates that class participation encompasses more than mere participation through raising hands and responding questions. It entails providing authentic experiences to children, fostering their independence. According to Jalolov and Nematjonov (2019), it is imperative to transition a child from a passive recipient of ideas to an active generator of ideas. This transformation involves developing critical thinking skills, the ability to independently strategize, taking initiative, formulating problems, evaluating potential solutions, selecting the most optimal solution, and effectively navigating unconventional circumstances. This implies that in the context of kindergarten, children are not merely passive recipients of instructions, sometimes referred to as "robots," but rather autonomous persons with agency to use their own decision-making abilities. Participating as a leader in the reciting of prayers is a common practise that has the potential to enhance one's capacity for independent action. Hence, the incorporation of participatory activities can be executed through diverse modalities;

nonetheless, educators must deliberate upon the optimal approach to foster their comprehensive growth.

### Conclusion

Participation activities encompass a range of planned and executed educational endeavours by educators aimed at enhancing the comprehensive development of children throughout their time in kindergarten or preschool. Participation encompasses not only academic learning, but also encompasses many facets of knowledge, such as class administration and organisation. Previous research findings indicate that active participation of children in school has a positive impact on their overall development, particularly in terms of social relationships. This conceptual study aims to serve as a comprehensive guide for ECE educators worldwide, with a particular focus on Malaysian educators. The objective is to assist educators in designing activities that effectively foster the development of children's identity, preparing them for their transition into primary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions. Educators are required to assume a highly significant role in the classroom, encompassing not just the academic domain but also extending beyond it. Educators must possess a comprehensive understanding of the optimal strategies to foster children's independence in diverse activities inside the school setting.

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