

May 8th

Thematic session 1 Political development and participation

Young people and participation: A review of processes and benefits

Degirmencioglu S. (1), Onen P. (2)

(1) Istanbul Bilgi University, Istanbul, Turkey | (2) Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey

In this paper we present an integrated review of the distinct literatures in political science, public health, sociology, education, social work as well as psychology on the processes and effects of youth participation and engagement. The central questions are to what extent and in which ways adolescents benefit from participation. We examine different types of participation (political participation, community involvement, service learning, extracurricular participation, sports participation, participation at home in domestic issues, religious participation, participation in research process). We employ a developmental framework to distinguish among processes leading to participation, the experience and process of participation, and the outcomes of the experience and the process of participation. We find that most studies on youth participation use marker variables that do not reflect the degree of participation or the quality of the participatory experience. There is clearly a need for better measures of the process of participation. We also find evidence that links youth participation to psychological well-being (e.g. self-esteem, optimism, lower depressed mood), agency (e.g., self-efficacy, future orientation) and lower levels of problem behavior (e.g., lower substance use, risk-taking). Effects sizes are small. Earlier forms of participation are related to later participation and/or engagement. Relationships between participation and the aforementioned outcomes are moderated by context.

Impact of in and out-of-classroom experiences in the political development of university students

Pedro M. Teixeira, Isabel Menezes

Faculty of Psychology and Education, Porto University

Youth political development has been associated with school and out-of-school experiences. Research has showed that an open classroom climate for discussion has a positive impact on intention to vote, civic knowledge, perceived self-efficacy and willingness to participate (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeld, & Roumiana, 2002; Menezes et al., 2002;).

Additionally, several studies reveal that voluntary experiences in associations and/or community service promote tolerance, political skills and efficacy (Hahn, 1998; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Terenzini et al., 1999).

In this paper we present a study within Portuguese higher education students (N=250) that focus on perceptions of classroom climate, the quality of participation experiences and dimensions of political development: trust in political institutions, perceptions of self and collective political efficacy and dispositions for future political involvement. Results show (i) a tendency for a decline in participation after the entrance in higher education, (ii) a positive impact of out-of-class and community experiences that balance actions and personal integration on trust, political efficacy and dispositions for future engagement, (iii) a positive impact of students' perceptions of an open classroom climate on trust and political efficacy.

The implications of these results for both for the design of educational projects and the provision of community participation experiences that aim the political development of adolescents and youngsters will be discussed.