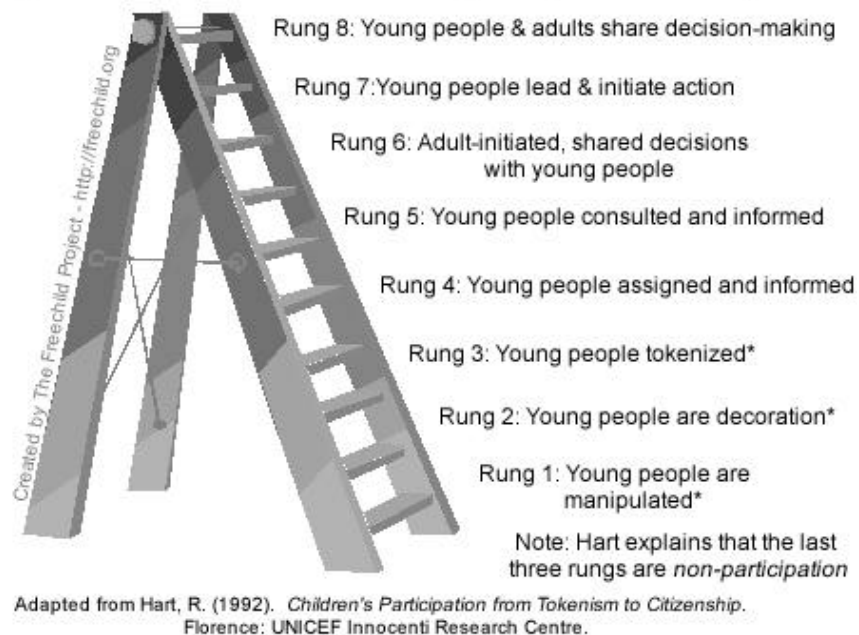


Youth voice can be viewed on a continuum ranging from the token participation of youth to the level where both youth and adults share decision-making.

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Hart's Ladder of Participation has been reproduced here to show the various levels of youth/adult partnerships that exist. The higher up the ladder, the more meaningful for the youth. In the bottom five, adults clearly have the power and control. The top five are more meaningful for youth. In these higher rungs, Hart's underlying principle is choice, where the design is to maximize the opportunity for youth participation.

The Ladder:

- 1. Manipulation:** This is purely for the benefit of the adults involved. Youth involvement might be a grant requirement so youth are USED to get the grant funds.
- 2. Decoration:** Organizations honor youth once a year in a ceremony, awards banquet, article in paper, etc. This is not a bad thing to do but is not necessarily meaningful in terms of partnership.
- 3. Tokenism:** Making small concessions to kids. Youth may feel empowered for a short period of time but then nothing happens. Example: Youth forum in which Youth Voice is expressed but not taken a step further.
- 4. Assigned and Informed.** This rung of the ladder marks the start of true participation. Youth and adults are working together. The Youth may have an active role but are told what to do.
- 5. Consulted and informed:** The project is designed and run by adults, but young people understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously.
- 6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions:** Though adults initiate the projects, the decision-making is shared with young people.
- 7. Youth initiated and directed:** Youth come up with the idea and take the ball and run with it.
- 8. Youth and adults share decision-making:** Youth and adults work together to share the decision-making. This is the most meaningful partnership for youth.