

# Learner Participation in Inclusive Education

Background Paper



**LPIE**

LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



**EUROPEAN AGENCY**  
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



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**European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education**



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The Agency gratefully acknowledges Alan Dyson's contribution as an external consultant for his valuable input to and advice on this paper.

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You may cite this publication as follows: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2025. *Learner Participation in Inclusive Education: Background Paper*. (K. Todorova and M. Bilgeri, eds.). Odense, Denmark



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With a view to greater accessibility, this report is available in accessible electronic format on the Agency's website: [www.european-agency.org](http://www.european-agency.org)

ISBN: 978-87-7599-126-6 (Electronic)

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## INTRODUCTION

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This background paper provides information on the essential topic of **participation** in relation to the [Learner Participation in Inclusive Education](#) (LPIE) activity. It reviews and elaborates on publications on learner participation in inclusive education. The intention is to use the findings as a basis for further work on the methodological and theoretical principles of qualitative data collection in policy research.

In addition, the paper supports the LPIE activity by providing a basis for the peer-learning activities, the stakeholder consultations and, finally, the development of LPIE outputs.

The paper addresses two essential questions:

- **[Section 1](#): How does the literature define participation?**  
This refers to definitions of participation contained in the literature.
- **[Section 2](#): Which dimensions of participation can be identified in the literature?**  
This deals with dimensions and aspects of participation that researchers and studies on participation have identified.

As there are numerous diverse aspects of learner participation, this background paper aims to adopt a clear structure by presenting these two sections to offer an understanding of the term 'participation'. This then leads to a [model of learner participation](#) to be used in the LPIE activity.



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# ATTEMPTING TO DEFINE PARTICIPATION AND IDENTIFY ITS DIMENSIONS

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The method used for this background paper was a literature search. Due to time constraints, an extensive literature review was not undertaken. The literature search took place between July and September 2024. It focused mainly on articles from scientific journals, but also considered books, reports, policy documents and publications from international organisations. Publications on the topic by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency) were also considered.

The background paper focuses on finding out how participation is defined and which dimensions of participation can be identified in the literature. Thus, the following search phrases were used:

- Learners' participation in inclusive education
- Participation of learners in inclusive schools
- Definition of learners' participation
- Dimensions of learners' participation.

The terms 'learners' and 'students' were both used during the search. As a first step, the Google, Google Scholar and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) databases and search engines were used. In the next step, the identified and selected articles were read, then further articles on the topics were identified, reviewed and used if relevant.

Two selection criteria were applied:

- Studies that provide a theoretical definition of participation
- Studies that try to operationalise or contribute towards the operationalisation of participation.

Three studies meeting the first selection criterion and four studies meeting the second criterion were included in the background paper. The review focused on publications from the period 2012 to 2024. However, exceptions were made where older studies were considered significant.

## **Section 1: Definition of learner participation in inclusive education**

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The LPIE activity plan refers to presence, placement, participation and progress ('the 4Ps') as key elements for inclusive education (Slee, 2018). Thereby, the activity plan focuses on the question of what data is needed to provide policy-makers with meaningful information on learner participation in inclusive settings.

The 4Ps represent a hierarchy, because 'presence in the education system is a prerequisite for an inclusive placement and participation, which in turn is a prerequisite for progress of any kind' (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020, p. 90). Accordingly, participation is a very significant component of and condition for inclusive education (Maxwell, Granlund & Augustine, 2018; European Agency, 2011). Therefore, in the different efforts to provide high-quality



inclusive education for all learners and improve inclusive education policy implementation, the question of how learners are participating needs to be addressed.

However, it is crucial to note that the term participation, like inclusion itself, is an ambiguous concept. This means it is often easier to recognise when a learner is not participating or not included than to recognise when a learner is participating and included. In light of this, this background paper attempts to provide a general understanding of the concept of participation and to develop a model of learner participation that can be used for the LPIE activity.

To understand participation, it is important to consider the interactions between learners and the environment in which they are expected to learn – typically, the school and classroom (European Agency, 2011). Bearing this in mind, an understanding of participation should be based on both the characteristics of the individual learner and the characteristics of the school or classroom (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020). Also, Booth and Ainscow agree that:

Increasing participation for everyone cannot be accomplished by a focus on individuals. The participation of individuals who have been subjected to exclusionary pressures will be limited unless a school is welcoming and responsive to diversity *in ways that value everyone equally* (2016, p. 23).

Schools have a crucial role in fostering or hindering learner participation. Factors at school or classroom level – such as appropriate equipment, resources and facilities, trained staff, and schools having autonomy and flexibility – can support learner participation. On the other hand, factors such as inflexible curricula, assessment guidelines which are not adapted to learners' needs or a lack of resources can constrain schools when it comes to improving learner participation.

Although better opportunities for participation can contribute to improved outcomes, learners can only benefit from the educational and social opportunities that schools provide if they are actively involved and engaged in them (Simeonsson, Carlson, Huntington, McMillen & Brent, 2001). This means it is not enough for schools to offer opportunities for participation in general. Those opportunities have to be matched to the individual learners' characteristics, needs and preferences, and learners must be enabled to engage with them. Therefore, when addressing participation, the interaction between the individual and the environment should always be considered (Imms et al., 2016).

Existing opportunities at the school or classroom level on one side and characteristics at the individual learner level, such as personal interests, motivation, autonomy, etc., on the other side play a crucial role in learner participation. Some learners may feel comfortable actively participating in an activity, while others may be more reluctant, depending on their experiences and preferences. This underlines the importance of considering both the institutional level and learners' individual perspectives in the processes of monitoring, evaluating and improving participation.

Understanding inclusive education as 'education for all learners' is especially relevant when talking about the participation of learners vulnerable to exclusion, as they may need different resources and individual support to be able to participate in the same activities





as their peers. It is essential to recognise and accommodate these differences to create possibilities for all learners to participate actively.

Even though participation is a main goal of any education system and educational authorities collect a lot of data on education, very little information and data about learner participation are available (European Agency, 2011). This is due to the absence of international instruments designed to measure participation in education, which is connected to the lack of an international definition of participation (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010).

The text that follows illustrates the lack of an agreed definition of participation. It provides examples of definitions of participation that address different phenomena.

Participation, according to Ramberg and Watkins, is:

... about the quality of the learning experience from a learner perspective, and therefore it must incorporate the views of the learners themselves (Ainscow, 2016). It relates to school-level process factors which facilitate or hinder a sense of belonging and a sense of autonomy to the learner, as well as a sense of a meaningful participation with peers of the same age (2020, p. 90).

In terms of the individual level of participation, this definition encompasses a few different phenomena – ‘the views of the learners’, ‘sense of autonomy’, ‘sense of belonging’ and ‘participation with peers’. These all relate to participation, but are not necessarily linked to each other. For example, experiencing high-quality learning is different from having a sense of autonomy, or having a sense of participation with peers, or developing a sense of belonging. While these phenomena may be linked to each other, they are by no means identical – and it would be possible to list further phenomena that could be regarded as essential to participation.

Booth also addresses a few phenomena and states that participation:

... implies learning alongside others and collaborating with them in shared lessons. It involves active engagement with what is learnt and taught and having a say in how education is experienced. But participation also involves being recognised for oneself and being accepted for oneself: I participate with you, when you recognise me as a person like yourself and accept me for who I am (2003, p. 2).

Booth’s definition (2003) addresses somewhat similar phenomena to those in the Ramberg and Watkins (2020) definition. However, it uses different terms, such as ‘learning alongside others’, ‘collaborating with them’, ‘recognised for oneself’ and ‘being accepted for oneself’. It also encompasses different phenomena, like ‘active engagement’ and ‘having a say’, and characterises them all as ‘participation’. Again, these phenomena are not necessarily linked to each other as, for example, ‘learning alongside others’ is different from ‘collaborating with them’ and different from ‘being recognised for oneself’.



A definition from Booth and Ainscow addresses additional phenomena related to participation that the previous definitions do not mention:

Participation is about being with and collaborating with others. It is about active engagement in learning. It is about involvement in decisions about one's life, including education and links to ideas of democracy and freedom. It also entails the important right not to participate, to assert one's autonomy against the group by saying: 'no' (2016, p. 26).

As well as 'active engagement' and 'collaborating with others', this definition highlights 'involvement in decisions', 'autonomy' and 'right not to participate'.

Different authors use different constructs and bring together different phenomena under the term of participation. However, it is important to mention that participation is not a concept restricted to particular groups or learners – rather it is a universal concept referring to all learners. Therefore, one aspect of Booth and Ainscow's definition (2016) is essential when referring to learners' participation – namely their right to choose whether they want to participate. Different learners will need different degrees of participation or non-participation for their well-being and learning progress. This is related to their preferences regarding the kinds of activities they want to be involved in or the types of interactions they enjoy. Therefore, participation is perceived as an individual experience, resource or possibility created through different interactions, rather than a structural or individual characteristic (Lakkala, Beaton & Kokko, 2024).

Although participation and its contribution to and influence on learners' outcomes has become an important research topic in recent years, there is currently no single and unified definition of the concept. Many authors have addressed the various interconnected aspects of learner participation in their studies and found that there are different definitions of participation (Maxwell, Alves & Granlund, 2012; Lakkala et al., 2024; Simeonsson et al., 2001) and that the concept of participation 'lacks clarity' (Imms et al., 2016, p. 29).

Given the diverse definitions of participation and the different terminology used, Müller-Kuhn, Zala-Mezö, Häbig, Strauss and Herzig (2021) conducted a systematic literature review to examine how the current literature uses the term participation and its synonyms. In the various articles they reviewed, learner participation was discussed as mainly related to five themes, which they called contexts:

- Democratic education
- Children's rights
- Well-being
- Learning
- School practice.

The results of the literature review show that, within the five contexts, the concept of learner participation is characterised in numerous ways. The wide variety of terminology used and the discussion of participation in different contexts make the meaning of participation elusive, because it depends on the point of view. This complexity makes it



difficult to identify and agree on a single definition of participation. Due to this, different researchers, different authors and different education systems tend to use different terminology.

Furthermore, the three definitions presented in this section highlight that participation is a multi-faceted concept that is interrelated with and encompasses various aspects. The different authors have brought diverse phenomena together to conceptualise participation. Table 1 presents these, with aspects that are similar marked with the same colour and number.

**Table 1. Overview of participation-related aspects in the presented definitions**

Ramberg & Watkins (2020)	Booth (2003)	Booth & Ainscow (2016)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 'the views of the learners' (1)</li> <li>● 'sense of autonomy' (1)</li> <li>● 'sense of belonging' (2)</li> <li>● 'participation with peers' (2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 'having a say' (1)</li> <li>● 'learning alongside others' (2)</li> <li>● 'collaborating with them' (2)</li> <li>● 'recognised for oneself' (2)</li> <li>● 'being accepted for oneself' (2)</li> <li>● 'active engagement' (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 'involvement in decisions' (1)</li> <li>● 'autonomy' (1)</li> <li>● 'right not to participate' (1)</li> <li>● 'collaborating with others' (2)</li> <li>● 'active engagement' (3)</li> </ul>

Although these definitions illustrate the different angles and aspects of what may be called participation, none of them is entirely sufficient, as none gives a complete picture of participation. This diversity and difficulty in operationalising participation and reaching an agreement on its meaning influences and complicates the process of measuring learner participation. This unclarity poses a challenge in defining the critical features and characteristics of meaningful data on learner participation in inclusive settings and how to use them to improve inclusive education policy implementation. However, despite the differing terminology in the definitions, the discussion makes it possible to identify aspects that are shared (Table 1) and that need to be considered when talking about participation.

Attempting to summarise the various aspects mentioned above, participation can be understood as a multi-dimensional term. Although there is no single internationally accepted definition of participation (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010), the three definitions above highlight aspects that are essential when addressing issues of learner participation.

For the further work in the LPIE activity and in conclusion from the above, learner participation is therefore defined as:

- **active engagement** of learners in different activities in and outside of the classroom;



- **their collaboration and interaction** with their peers or teachers, and their personal feeling of **being accepted and valued** by others and **developing a sense of belonging**;
- opportunities for learners to **express their views** and **have a say** in different processes related to their education and learning, and – most importantly – their **right to participate or not**, depending on their needs, interests and preferences.

To summarise, section 1 focuses on articles that offer a broad theoretical definition of participation, though typically these also list different aspects of participation.

Section 2, below, explores studies that aim to operationalise or contribute towards the operationalisation of the concept of participation. These also typically list different aspects of participation, though they tend to define them more precisely, with a view to observing, measuring and analysing participation on the ground. Section 2 also includes studies reporting on how participation is defined in the research literature.

The distinction between the two sections is, inevitably, somewhat arbitrary. However, the aim is to guide the reader from appreciating the diversity and complexity of definitions in this field, to thinking about some ways in which these definitions might be operationalised.

## Section 2: Dimensions of learner participation

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Aiming, among other things, to investigate how different researchers defined participation, Imms et al. (2016) conducted a systematic literature review in which they analysed the language used by researchers who aimed to enhance participation outcomes for children with disabilities. They concluded that two constructs appear to capture the essence of the concept of participation:

- Attendance
- Involvement.

**Attendance** is ‘defined as “being there” and measured as frequency of attending, and/or the range or diversity of activities in which an individual takes part’ (Imms et al., 2016, p. 36). **Involvement** refers to ‘the experience of participation while attending’ (ibid.), including ‘elements of engagement, motivation, persistence, social connection, and affect’ (Imms et al., 2017, p. 20). According to the authors, attendance can be seen as a required precondition for involvement. In view of the 4Ps (presence, placement, participation and progress) concept mentioned above, attendance can be linked to the concept of presence or can be understood as one aspect of ‘presence’. According to Ramberg and Watkins, ‘*Presence* is about learners’ access to and attendance within the education system’ (2020, p. 89).

In light of this, ‘attendance’ as ‘being there’ – for example, being admitted to a school – can be seen as learner participation at its most basic level (European Agency, 2011). This level comprises basic aspects that are a fundamental precondition for the other aspects of learner participation and, consequently, for learners’ outcomes. However, although necessary, attendance does not guarantee involvement (Imms et al., 2017). Booth agrees that ‘Participation in education involves going beyond access’ (2003, p. 2). The extent and



the quality of participation cannot be shown only by indicators referring to ‘being there’; to fully participate in education, a learner must be consistently and meaningfully involved (European Agency, 2011).

In addition to the two identified constructs – attendance and involvement – the literature review by Imms et al. (2016) identified three more themes that can influence participation and describe concepts related to it: preferences, sense of self and activity competence. These three, called intrinsic person-related concepts related to participation, together with the two expounded constructs (attendance and involvement) form the family of participation-related constructs, as defined by Imms et al. (2017).

Preferences are an important predictor of participation, as they are related to an individual’s previous experiences. They give learners the opportunity to choose activities and tasks that are meaningful and important for them (Imms et al., 2016). Preferences are connected to the quality of participation, defined as ‘involvement that is satisfying, enjoyable and generates valued outcomes’ (Bruno et al., 2022, p. 692). According to their preferences, learners can choose to participate in activities that are meaningful to them and can contribute towards their enjoyable involvement.

Regarding the other two themes, activity competence is the capacity to carry out the activity in line with expected standards. It includes cognitive, physical and affective skills and abilities. Sense of self is related to personal outcomes of participation, connected to self-confidence, satisfaction and self-esteem (Imms et al., 2016; Imms et al., 2017).

In their 2017 publication, Imms et al. explain the relationship between participation (comprising attendance and involvement) and the intrinsic person-related concepts related to participation. According to them, there is two-sided interaction between participation and a learner’s personal characteristics, whereby the learner’s preferences, sense of self and activity competency are some personal characteristics that influence the extent and depth of participation. However, the extent and depth of participation can also influence these characteristics.

In conclusion, it could be stated that attendance is a necessary but insufficient condition for participation, as involvement is also necessary. Likewise, it is not enough simply to provide opportunities for participation, since the extent to which those opportunities are taken up depends on within-person factors – though these factors are, in turn, shaped by previous experiences of participation.

To expand on the abovementioned conclusion from the papers by Imms et al. (2016) and Imms et al. (2017), it could be further highlighted that attendance and involvement are essential aspects of participation, and that participation starts with attendance. Attendance or ‘being there’ is the most important precondition for other aspects of participation to be possible. Nevertheless, ‘being physically present [...] is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for full participation’ (European Agency, 2011, p. 27).

The COVID-19 pandemic measures have shown, however, that online education can make participation possible to an extent. Online education can allow learners to be present and attend different teaching and learning activities. However, the design and teaching methods used determine how actively learners can really be involved and participate.

This background paper starts with ‘attendance’, but goes further and focuses on understanding different participation aspects that refer to more than merely ‘being there’.



More than attendance is ‘involvement’, which Imms et al. (2017) define as referring to learners’ experiences in terms of engagement, motivation, persistence, social connection and affect.

However, this definition of involvement still does not address all the elements needed for full participation, such as autonomy, having a voice or having the right to participate or not. Therefore, the following sub-section explores further identified aspects and phenomena of participation that start with, but go beyond, attendance.

### **Participation beyond ‘being there’**

With the goal of observing, analysing and improving participation and thus improving inclusive education, a participation model was developed in Sweden (Edström, Gardelli & Backman, 2022). Based on first developments by Janson in 2005, the participation model is described by Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers (2018) and addressed in Edström et al. (2022). The model refers to six aspects – belonging, accessibility, interaction, acceptance, involvement and autonomy – as described below:

- **Belonging** refers to learners’ right to be part of and formally admitted to a school (Szönyi & Söderqvist Dunkers, 2018). Alongside formal belonging, there is informal belonging – that is, learners’ feeling of being part of a group (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2018, cited in Edström et al., 2022). Edström et al. (ibid.) argue that belonging becomes a mere formality if its informal sense is not considered.
- **Accessibility** in the participation model is divided into three aspects: **physical accessibility**, **accessibility to meaning context** and **accessibility to socio-communicative interaction**. As Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers (2018) explain, physical accessibility relates to access to places, objects, activities and materials. Accessibility to meaning context refers to making the meaning of what has been done or said understandable and accessible for learners. This should consider the different needs and ways that learners perceive, understand or remember things. If accessibility to meaning context is not ensured and learners cannot understand the meaning of school assignments, they will seem pointless to them (Edström et al., 2022). The third aspect, accessibility to socio-communicative interaction, refers to understanding and communicating with others; learners should be able to understand, be understood by and communicate with each other (Szönyi & Söderqvist Dunkers, 2018).
- **Interaction** refers to learners interacting with each other – for example, talking about something while working together on the same activity (Szönyi & Söderqvist Dunkers, 2018). A lack of interaction can lead, for example, to an absence of team or collaborative group work in a classroom (Edström et al., 2022).
- **Acceptance** refers to how a learner is seen and accepted or recognised by others (Szönyi & Söderqvist Dunkers, 2018). A lack of acceptance will cause learners to not feel valued (Edström et al., 2022).
- **Involvement** is related to learners’ interests and motivation in an activity; however, it is greatly influenced by the other aspects of accessibility, interaction and acceptance (Szönyi & Söderqvist Dunkers, 2018). Involvement is a subjective



experience and depends on the intrinsic motivation that can drive learners to be fully involved (Edström et al., 2022).

- **Autonomy** refers to learners influencing decisions connected to different aspects of their learning and having a say in what are they doing. It also refers to the right to not participate in something (Szönyi & Söderqvist Dunkers, 2018).

Edström et al. believe that these six aspects ‘all together [...] constitute the concept of participation, within different cultures’ (2022, p. 2947). Considering how all six aspects are interrelated and how the realisation of some aspects requires that others are already reached, it can be agreed that the absence of any one of these aspects would prevent full participation.

The Framework for Participation, elaborated and presented by Black-Hawkins (2010), addresses similar aspects of participation. This framework has three main parts and each of these refers to a number of elements relevant for participation, as presented here:

- **Participation and access: being there** refers to ‘joining the school’, ‘staying in the school’, ‘access to spaces and places’ and ‘access to the curriculum’
- **Participation and collaboration: learning together** refers to ‘learning alongside other students’, ‘supporting students to learn together’, ‘members of staff working together’, ‘staff and students learning together’ and ‘schools and other institutions working together’
- **Participation and diversity: recognition and acceptance** comprises ‘recognition and acceptance of students, by staff’, ‘recognition and acceptance of staff, by staff’ and ‘recognition and acceptance of students, by students’ (ibid., p. 32).

An article by Anderson, Graham and Thomas (2019) also addresses learner participation. The authors present part of the results from a research project that focused on learner participation and well-being at school. They also discuss the creation of a tool called the Student Participation Scale, designed to quantitatively measure different aspects of learner participation. The scale looks at six aspects or components of participation: working together, having a voice about schooling, having a voice about activities outside the classroom, having a say with influential people at school, having influence on decisions made at school, and having choice at school.

In another published output from the aforementioned research project, Anderson, Graham, Simmons and Gardon defined these six elements of participation as follows:

- **Working together** – ‘the extent to which students work with other students and with their teachers’ to make changes at school
- **Having a voice about schooling** – ‘the extent to which students have avenues to express their views about their schooling’
- **Having a voice about activities outside the classroom** – ‘the extent to which students have avenues to express their views about school activities outside the classroom’
- **Having a say with influential people at school** – ‘the extent to which student views are heard and taken into consideration by influential people at school, such as the



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principal, deputy, SRC [Student Representative Council] and other student leaders and teachers’

- **Having influence on decisions made at school** – ‘the extent to which students report their views are listened to and have influence on decisions made at school about their learning and in school activities outside of the classroom’
- **Having choice at school** – ‘the extent to which students have choices regarding their learning, activities and other aspects of school life’ (2019, p. 6).

The various authors cited in this section have identified both similar and different aspects that are important to consider when focusing on participation. Moreover, these aspects must be considered when focusing on collecting and using meaningful data on learner participation to improve inclusive education policy implementation.

However, given the diversity of participation-related phenomena or participation-related aspects and that ‘decisions about policy priorities within the area of participation can only be taken once the concept itself is further clarified’ (European Agency, 2011, p. 26), the [Conclusion](#) attempts to group similar identified aspects into dimensions. This is to create clarity and to define participation for the further work within the LPIE activity.





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## CONCLUSION: DEVELOPING AN LPIE MODEL OF PARTICIPATION

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Having so many different definitions of participation and participation-related aspects makes it difficult to conceptualise and operationalise participation (Anderson, Graham & Thomas, 2019). However, it is noticeable that many of the aspects and phenomena mentioned in the studies that provide a theoretical definition of participation (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020; Booth, 2003; Booth & Ainscow, 2016) overlap with those identified in the studies that try to operationalise or contribute to the operationalisation of participation and participation-related aspects (Imms et al., 2017; Szönyi & Söderqvist Dunkers, 2018; Edström et al., 2022; Black-Hawkins, 2010; Anderson, Graham & Thomas, 2019).

Based on the studies considered for the purposes of this background paper, a few aspects of participation could be identified and summarised in four dimensions of participation:

- **Physical participation:** this can be understood as learner participation at the basic level. It refers to aspects like physical accessibility (for example, to places, objects, materials, activities, tasks, etc.), formal admission of a learner to a school, a learner being there or being physically present, and learners attending the school.
- **Engaged participation:** this consists of aspects referring to engagement in learning and the extent to which learners find their tasks motivating, meaningful and enjoyable. These aspects are engagement, subjective experience, interest, involvement, (intrinsic) motivation, and understanding the meaning of a task or activity (of what is being done).
- **Socio-emotional participation:** this comprises socio-emotional aspects that are relevant for learners and are necessary to enable full and meaningful participation. Aspects include social connection, sense of belonging, acceptance, recognition, interaction, collaboration, learning together, working together and understanding and communicating with others.
- **Decision-making participation:** this refers to the extent to which learners have the possibility to express their views, the extent to which learners' views are taken into consideration, and the extent to which learners can influence and participate in decision-making related to their education. The aspects of this dimension are autonomy, having a say, having a voice, having choice and having influence.

All these dimensions of participation and the aspects contained in them are interconnected and play an important role in achieving full, active and meaningful learner participation. [Figure 1](#) presents the dimensions and their respective aspects.



**Figure 1. Visual presentation of the LPIE model of participation**

*(based on Ramberg & Watkins, 2020; Booth, 2003; Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Imms et al., 2017; Szönyi & Söderqvist Dunkers, 2018; Edström et al., 2022; Black-Hawkins, 2010; Anderson, Graham & Thomas, 2019; Anderson, Graham, Simmons & Gardon, 2019)*



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Drawing out the implications of the presented model, a few concluding points can be highlighted here:

- Participation is multi-dimensional, so it would be unrealistic to expect there to be a single measure of participation.
- Breaking the concept of participation down into its component parts can allow practitioners, researchers and policy-makers to decide which aspects they wish to prioritise in a particular set of circumstances.
- Once the concept is broken down, it becomes easier to operationalise the different aspects and start thinking about how these might be identified in the field.
- Likewise, it becomes possible to think about how these aspects might be developed.
- All of this is with the caveat that it is always possible to conceptualise participation differently and that this conceptualisation, therefore, should not be overly rigid.

By breaking down the concept of participation into its individual components, as shown in Figure 1, the Agency member countries involved in the LPIE activity can better identify and choose the specific aspects of participation they wish to prioritise and focus on in the further LPIE work. These priority aspects will thus serve as a starting point for the activity's further work, which focuses on the collection, analysis and use of meaningful data on learner participation. In particular, the activity's further work will explore how to collect and use data related to the chosen aspects of participation. This is crucial for creating informed strategies that can effectively enhance participation and inclusion in education.



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