
Papageorgiou, P. (2017) 'Why I've become involved in organisations and activities based on children's rights, in particular the right to participation?' in Learning for Well-being Magazine, Issue 3, published by the Learning for Well-being Foundation.

Viewpoint: Why I've become involved in organisations and activities based on children's rights, in particular the right to participation?

By Polyxeni Papageorgiou

When you are considered to be a child, you are meant to have a specific mindset followed by certain characteristics. Children are often treated as if they are incapable of contributing to society in an effective way regardless of the fact that they are part of it. An example told to me by a wonderful woman was that, people often ask adults how to build a children's park without asking children themselves how they would prefer it. In other words, there is this mentality of adults thinking that children cannot have a say or that children cannot understand or *vice versa*, and therefore there is a huge gap between the two.

My little 'excuse' for participating and getting involved in organisations and activities that are based on children's rights and participation is the fact that they make me feel a sense of equality and determination for a better future. It works as a way of appreciating life and feeling accepted and appreciated by society. It is very important to be able to express yourself freely to anyone and know that they hear you and value your opinion. Personally, I believe that if children and adults worked together there could be some great results in our societies along with greater respect towards each age. Children might not be able to explain what rocket science is or how the common market works, but they sure can tell us their opinion about what they think of matters that affect them, such as education and entertainment.

I was keen to realise that there are so many organisations, delegations and forums that focus exactly on children's rights and participation and whenever I have had the chance to

I tried to get involved. Cyprus Children's Parliament was something I experienced for two consecutive years. Not only did it increase my knowledge on my rights as a child but it also helped me develop as a person and think about how we as children can make a better future and become active members of society. I have also been involved with CATS since 2014. CATS stands for Children as Actors for Transforming Society; it is an international forum held yearly in Caux Palace, Switzerland. It started in 2013 and every year gathers people of all ages, origins and 'social classes' to work for a week on children's rights and participation, have fun, get inspired and adapt with the Spirit of Caux. I could write pages and pages on how this forum has inspired me, changed me and educated me as a person. Each year has a different theme, people, vibe and outcomes. What is most important about it though, is the fact that we all come together and work together and share ideas and thoughts about children's rights and participation in society as a team without adults or children. Only with People.

As I said previously, I could write so many things about CATS and Cyprus Children's Parliament and why for me children's rights are important. In my opinion, everyone should be able to feel important and be able to share their thoughts, concerns and ideas with people. Why should this be a limitation for children? It is very important to feel accepted by society, and feel like you are being taken into consideration and matter as a human being. It is even more important to feel okay in your own skin regardless of colour or age or origin. We all need to understand what falls under the umbrella of Equality and its importance. To sum up, these were some of the reasons why I love being involved with such matters. I myself am not old, neither am I young. I am an 18-year-old girl who doesn't need to be categorised in any section of the two. Each age has its grace and needs to be respected and appreciated. Getting involved in such activities reminds me of what is really important in life and gives me strength and energy to work for a better me and a better future for this world. For me, it does not matter what your age or background is. Everyone is important and children's rights and their right to participation should be taken into full consideration when thinking of the future of this world. Simply because they are the future and they deserve a world based on the right rationales and principles.

Author

I was born on 19 February 1998 in the beautiful Island of Cyprus where I was also raised along with my 3 brothers and sister in the coastal town of Limassol. I was always interested in activities that helped me broaden my horizons and expand my knowledge and by 2013 I was a member of Cyprus Children's Parliament. In 2014, I visited CATS for the first time with 3 more members of the CCP, and then in 2016 I was a part of their Core Team. Currently I am a first-year Law student based in Aberdeen, the 'Granite City' of Scotland, UK.