Chapter 3
Differentiating and Evaluating Conceptions and Examples of Participation in Environment-Related Learning

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3.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together a range of critical perspectives on the concepts and practices of participation. Starting with recent debates about the tyrannical and transformational possibilities of participatory approaches in the field of development, we explore echoes of these critiques in education, with a focus on learning and teaching about the environment and sustainable development. The chapter illustrates how three major perspectives on participatory learning – behaviourist, cognitive, and situative – help differentiate current understandings and can inform individualised and shared expectations of participatory approaches to environment-related learning. The chapter also sets out a series of questions to aid critical investigation of examples of participatory forms of environment-related learning, outlining an evaluative framework that highlights three key dimensions to participatory activities – practice, theory, and meta-theory. We conclude the chapter with an extended example of the application of the framework, and discuss a range of issues for participatory work in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the development of learner competences, and citizen engagement with participatory learning that aims to foster wider and deeper participation in civil society.

3.2 Being Critical: the Development Context

Rahnema's (1992) review of participatory approaches to development is a landmark in the attempts to foster a critical appraisal of the concept and practice of participation. Noting that the concept is linguistically rooted in the notion of 'taking part'

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with others or 'having a share' in something with others (*Oxford English Dictionary*), Rahnema argues that the term has become a part of modern jargon and can now be used to 'support the most fanciful constructions' (p. 116).

Rahnema sketches the history of participatory approaches to development and how the term has come to be both increasingly fashionable and commonly associated with attempts to promote social change through such processes as 'popular participation', 'empowerment', 'dialogical intervention', and 'conscientization'. In a more recent analysis, Hickey and Mohan (2004:3) argue that at the heart of such participatory approaches lies the 'promise of empowerment and transformative development for marginal people', and to many observers, it is the ubiquity of the terminology of participation within and across policies, preferred approaches to development, and evaluation techniques, that has become most striking.

For development, key concepts and expressions of participation have tended to be those linked with Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and with PRA and PAR theorists like Orlando Fals-Borda, Anisur Rahman, and Robert Chambers, but as Rahmena (1992), Williams (1983), and Cornwall and Brock (2005) show, their cultural and conceptual roots go much deeper. In education there are similar links, particularly to PAR, and most typically to Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich in the wider educational discourse, while in health- and environment-related learning, as illustrated by Roger Hart in Chapter 2 of this volume, discussion often return to the *Ladder of Children's Participation* (e.g. Mordock and Krasny 2001).

In a variety of ways, these approaches and their advocates have helped encourage a broader critical awareness of participation. With a socially critical perspective in mind, they have highlighted that participatory processes and situations related to decision-making *about, in*, and *for* social change are replete with power issues and subject to hegemonic ideological and cultural forces. For example, from a Gramscian standpoint (Gramsci 1971:412–413), the notion of hegemony calls for educators to attend to the prevailing 'common sense' formed in culture and diffused by civic institutions (like schools), and which informs those values, customs, and spiritual ideals that induce 'spontaneous' consent to the status quo, through their various channels of 'persuasion' and 'propaganda'. In such circumstances, both ensuring and securing ongoing stakeholder participation may represent a powerful, concrete response to address ideological and political domination in society. However, as Rahnema (amongst others) has argued, there is also the distinct possibility – and a long history – of practice not matching the theory of participation, with approaches and participants failing to realise the counterhegemonic potential of participatory processes.

This gap, between the discourse and experience of participation, is a key starting point for critique of participation and participatory approaches. Attempts to explain the existence (and persistence) of gaps through inquiries as to whether current theorisations and praxis genuinely aim at and achieve socially critical objectives or participant ownership (see Cornwall 2002; Cooke and Kothari 2001), have dominated recent debates in the field of development. For the purposes of our discussion, we briefly focus on three inter-related themes in this recent debate and critique: terminology, history, and practice.

First, Williams (1983) warns of the potential loss of meaning and the risks associated with our forgetfulness about the cultural origins of the terminology, describing contemporary 'keywords' such as 'participation' and 'empowerment' as 'warmly persuasive' or feel-good words. Emptying the meaning of the concept, plasticizing it, or making it a 'floating signifier', are key issues in addressing the hegemonic role of such concepts (Laclau 1990). For example, in a recent UNRISD publication, Cornwall and Brock (2005:4) describe 'participation' and 'empowerment' as part of larger 'chains of equivalence', those long list of key terms that tend to be bunched together, such as, participation, empowerment, poverty reduction and then partnership, governance, accountability, and so forth (ibid.):

> [T]he more words that become part of the chain, the more that meaning resides in the connections between them. Pared down to the elements that would permit coherence, the terms that form part of today's development jargon are reduced to monochrome.

While typologising the concept and practice also risks making participatory approaches appear either black or white, the emergence of a range of ways in which to categorise them also serves to illustrate how the rhetoric may not necessarily correlate with reality. How participation is lived out reveals a diversity of forms and formulations: as *transitive* or *intransitive* participation; as *moral, amoral*, or *immoral* participation; as *forced* or *free* participation; or, as *manipulative* or *spontaneous* participation (Rahnema 1992). For each subcategory, who is 'targeted' to take part in such participation raises direct questions about how a related 'keyword', such as democracy (see Chapter 11 by Schnack, this volume), is also enacted:

- Is it enough to limit participation to those who are invited and amenable to participation?
- Should it be those who in some sense 'need' to participate?
- In what sense must the participants represent all sectors (and not just stakeholders) in society?

While such distinctions help map out the intended and actual uses of participatory terminology, they also reveal something more in terms of the lived experiences of the concept-in-use. Rahnema (1992), for example, has been particularly quick to tie this potential diversity of experience and practice of participation to the unmatched interest governments and development institutions have taken in the concept since the 1970s (see pp. 117–120). Regarding this 'co-option of participation', Rahnema observes:

1. The concept is no longer perceived as a threat.
2. Participation has become a politically attractive slogan.
3. Participation has become, economically, an appealing proposition.
4. Participation is now perceived as an instrument for greater effectiveness as well as a new source of investment.
5. Participation is becoming a good fund-raising device.
6. An expanded concept of participation could help the private sector to be directly involved in the development business.

Elaborating and substantiating such observations, Cornwall and Brock (2005) outline a 'genealogy of participation' in development, paying particular attention to the switch that occurred in the 1980s, from a more 'people-centred' notion to one fitting into the neoliberal 'regime', when, 'community participation became a channel through which popular participation began to be operationalized' (p. 7). According to Cornwall and Brock, the late 1990s saw participation assume the primary interpretation of being about providing mechanisms through which policy objectives could be realised, yet where: 'conflict and power are as absent from this world as they are from the world we are offered in today's development policies' (p. 9).

Such developments have resulted in participation becoming mainstream rhetoric, often with positive connotations for the public, politicians, and economists alike, despite the fact that interests and incentives for using participation and promoting it are often poles apart. This has prompted development critics such as Gustavo Esteva to identify a wide range of negative examples of the strategic use of participatory processes by planners, experts, and economists (e.g. in World Bank-funded structural adjustment programmes and those inspired by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in the late 1990s, where it is argued participation tends to be by invitation only and the voices of the poor remain marginalised). There are also case studies and reviews of the weaknesses in the grounding, theorisation and operationalisation of participatory concepts by community activists (see Escobar 1995; Nederveen 2001; Chambers 2004).

For Esteva, key weaknesses in participatory praxis have included: the pitfalls, shortcomings, and blind spots of empowerment strategies as operated by some donor or NGO initiatives; the false promises or subtle manipulations offered by some 'concientization' or 'change' agents working from 'progressive historical-cultural realities'; and the professionalisation of grass roots activities, particularly through upscaling and mainstreaming participation in development work (see Esteva 1985, as an example, and Chapter 7 by Lotz-Sisitka and O'Donoghue, and Chapter 8 by Vare, this volume). Indeed, Rahnema (1992:126), in voicing concern about both the potential or systemic counterproductiveness of some participatory processes and concepts, has helped redirect attention away from simply acknowledging shortcomings towards promoting the ongoing need for critical appraisal of the term:

> Participation, which is also a form of intervention, is too serious and ambivalent a matter to be taken lightly, or reduced to an amoeba word lacking any precise meaning, or a slogan, or fetish, or for that matter, only an instrument or methodology. Reduced to such trivialities, not only does it cease to be a boon, but it runs the risk of acting as a deceptive myth or a dangerous tool for manipulation. To understand the many dimensions of participation, one needs to enquire seriously into all its roots and ramifications, these going deep into the heart of human relationships and the socio-cultural realities conditioning them.

Such a standpoint is important for tracing the roots of what some might regard as the backlash towards participation in the field of development studies over recent years (typified perhaps by Cooke and Kothari 2001). Indeed, recent responses to the critical appraisal of participation now attempt to work constructively with such

critique (see, for example, Hickey and Mohan 2004) by explicitly addressing how ‘politics matters’, and by emphasising the need to understand:

- The ways in which participation relates to existing power structures and political systems
- How participation works with and for the ‘poorest of the poor’
- How it can shatter an all to comfortable ‘myth of community’, that is, when community also assumes the status of a ‘feel good’ word and is left unproblematised and unexamined in participatory approaches and appraisal (see, for example, Chapter 8 by Vare, this volume)

Yet while we should recognise that these lines of critique have tended to both emanate from and been contextualised within the development field, as a chapter in a book about learning and participation, we must also consider their relevance and ramifications for participation in environment-related educational contexts (see also Chapters 7 and 8).

3.3 Participation and Environmental Education

Carlos Seré, in his position as Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, of Canada’s International Development Research Centre, once noted (IDRC 1998; unpaginated): ‘Development isn’t just a technical issue, it’s a social issue. Sustainability can only be established with the participation of all.’

While we would support such a view, participation is clearly neither a given nor unambiguous in development or sustainability – for the individual, or society at large. Some participate more than others, and some participate – for want of better words – more effectively and efficiently. Important questions for educators then are, how do people learn to participate, and relatedly, why?

We can start addressing these questions by noting that the emergence of the discourse on participation in education resonates with broader historical shifts in Western understandings of childhood, the main locus for educational efforts. Broadly speaking, since the 19th century understandings have been shaped by such social ideologies as protectionism towards children, and in the 20th century, by biological and psychological models of developmentalism in childhood. The latter highlights the fact that children tend to be treated as ‘human becomings’ (Farrell 2005:6) rather than fully human (beings). Consequently, while children may develop and share many of the qualities of adulthood, by the very nature of the way these terms have come to be understood, the full humanity of children is regarded as not yet having been reached or established – childhood is organic in essence, it is about growth and maturation (Matthews *et al.* 1999). Thus both metaphorically and literally, children will inevitably ‘fall short’ in having full and equal rights of participation in decision-making about education, the environment, health, and development, or for that matter, research (see, for example, Chapter 2 by Hart, and Chapter 18 by Barratt and Barratt Hacking, this volume).

An alternative perspective on children that has received more attention since the 1980s and 1990s, is grounded in the then newly emerging fields of the sociology

and psychology of childhood (see Roberts 2001; Shier 2001; Danby and Farrell 2004). Strong emphasis is placed on viewing childhood as a socio-culturally constructed category (Tobin 1995; James *et al*. 1998), and thus attention is drawn to the legal, social, economic, and political dimensions to childhood and the naming and framing of the category, 'child'. Thus for Farrell (2005:6), children are to be regarded as 'competent participants in their everyday worlds' and quite 'capable of participation in or withdrawal from' organised activities, such as learning, teaching, and inquiry – a stance that echoes many of the sentiments of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (see Chapter 2).

In the field of environmental education, alongside key concepts such as interest, awareness and sensitivity, knowledge and understanding, attitudes and values, and skills, participation remains enshrined as a key objective (and approach) for learning. The understandings of environmental education set out in key foundational documents for the field include statements to this effect: the Belgrade Charter argues that students should be provided 'with opportunities for active participation in all levels of activities to solve environmental problems' (UNESCO–UNEP 1976). The Tbilisi Declaration is another major UNESCO–UNEP reference point for the field, and it states that participation is a component of the key objectives of environmental education: *to help provide social groups and individuals with an opportunity to be actively involved at all levels in working toward resolution of environmental problems* (UNESCO–UNEP 1978). Even though there is no formal recognition of the aforementioned shifts in the understandings of childhood in wider society, broadly supportive outlooks to those outlined by Farrell can be found in the UNESCO–UNEP documentation, with both the Tbilisi and Belgrade documents (and subsequent revisions and restatements at Moscow 1987, and Thessaloniki 1997) providing a benchmark for many subsequent definitional statements.

The UNESCO–UNEP perspectives on participation have reverberated throughout the national standards and guidelines of many Western environmental education organisations, like those of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). In Iozzi *et al*.'s (1990) *Assessment of Learning Outcomes in Environmental Education*, for example, published by UNESCO and endorsed by NAAEE in its *Excellence in Environmental Education* guidelines for learning (NAAEE 2004), 'active participation' is endorsed as a key component of environmental education when it comes to promoting responsible environmental behaviours. Here, participation is regarded as helping solve problems and resolve issues by engaging learners in 'environmentally sound consumer purchasing, methods for conserving resources, assisting with the enforcement of environmental regulations, using personal and interpersonal means to encourage environmentally sound practices, and encouraging environmentally sound policies and legislative initiatives.' The sense here is that while a learner has the immediate horizon as a child, there is the more distant one as an adult to bear in mind; put differently, participation is something that happens across the lifespan and should not be limited to either childhood or adulthood, hence the value of lifelong environmental education.

Underpinning such a position is a core value within much of environmental education: recognising and advocating ongoing personal acceptance – now and for the future – of the need for a sustainable lifestyle and a commitment to participation and change (see also Chapter 17 by Shusler and Krasny, this volume). Indeed, the core value is echoed and broadened in international statements on sustainable development and ESD, as in *Agenda 21*, Chapter 23, where it is argued that: 'One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making.'

As Hart has outlined in Chapter 2, environmental and health educators have felt a need for models or frameworks to help practitioners reflect on and develop their practice when initiating, planning, and evaluating participatory approaches and programmes with learners. Arnstein's (1979) *Ladder of Participation*, or more commonly Hart's (1992) adaptation of this model (Figure 2.1), has met this need well, and the Ladder has become a widely established and frequently used tool in environmental and health education and other youth-, community-, and education-oriented sectors.

However, the general usefulness of such models, as in development, has received critique in recent years, and from a variety of perspectives. Key themes within this critique can reflect debates around the aforementioned shift in understandings of childhood and the capabilities of children, as well as critical perspectives on how underlying hegemonic structures are (best) addressed (see Chapter 2 on responses to this).

In more detail, criticism has highlighted the significance of the counter-intuitive notion of 'non-participation', which emphasises the principle of creating or considering the value of situations where participants can make a choice about whether they wish to participate or not in the first place, or perhaps more importantly, why they might continue to do so (Treseder 1997; Farrell 2005). This suggests that 'non-participation' may well be a valuable and legitimate option, no matter whether participants are children or adults, and even if the participatory project is widely regarded as a 'good thing'. Second, arguing from a more pragmatic viewpoint, and as Hart discusses in Chapter 2, theoretical and experiential critique has questioned whether activities on the 'lower rungs' of the ladder should be considered of less value than those described on the higher rungs, and whether it is always best to aim for the highest level of participation possible. Thus Lardner (2001) is one of the critics who argue for a contextual set of expectations and evaluations of participatory approaches and processes: that different levels of participation are appropriate to different circumstances (see also Treseder 1997; Jensen 2000). Third, in the tradition of interpreting the very notion of participation as an endeavour for increasing the level of empowerment of 'marginal' peoples (used here in the broadest sense but in this instance, a notion that might also include school students or children), critics have sought to create awareness of or 'unmask' cases, examples or situations where 'participation' is commended, but in terms of empowerment or transformation, it has not (yet?) materialised. These 'tyrannical' expressions of participation are typified by the 'manipulative', 'decorative', and

'tokenistic' forms of participation – the 'lower rungs', illustrated and discussed at length by Mannion (2003).

3.4 Participation and Learning

So far we have considered participation within the context of debate and critique in development and about the models of participatory situations or initiatives with children, but there is another major focus for discussion that should not go ignored: namely, the various understandings of *learning* available in participation discourses and their role in conceptualising and differentiating conceptions and practices of participation. To illustrate the range of possibilities here, the increased emphasis on participation in educational projects and processes are considered in relation to various traditions in learning theory. Table 3.1 summarises an international review by Greeno *et al*. (1996) on the key characteristics of three mainstream perspectives on learning: the behaviourist, cognitive, and situative. We use this table to highlight:

- Differences in possible understandings of participatory learning in the light of their underlying epistemology and the source(s) of their constitutive concepts
- Alternative conceptions and understandings of 'knowing' and some examples of understandings of learning within each perspective
- The diversity in the constructions of the motivation for and transfer of learning, and hence, of motivation for and transfer of learning in participation, and finally
- Responses to matters of accountability and assessment in participatory learning

Are the differences in perspective irreconcilable when it comes to participation? Not really, according to Greeno *et al*. (1996:24), who go on to argue that: 'All of the psychological perspectives on learning school subjects assert that learning requires the active participation of students achieved via extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation or engaged participation.' Moreover, seen within the context of education and its institutions (typically schools, but increasingly non-formal and informal settings for lifelong learning), each of the three perspectives suggests a deliberate linking of the quantity and quality of learning outcomes to a focus on the individual and the 'internal' rather than to the 'external' of the learner. That is, the principal focus for understanding and engaging in participatory learning processes should no longer be solely that of the learner's environment and observable behaviours in education but the core challenges of fostering sustained and deeper levels of learner motivation and engagement.

Nonetheless, digging a little deeper into the material summarised in Table 3.1, the answer is a little more complicated than our first reading. For example, from a cognitive perspective, learning is understood to be an active, constructive,

Table 3.1 Key marker characteristics of alternative perspectives on learning. (Based on Greeno *et al*. 1996.)

Perspective	Behaviourist	Cognitive	Situative
Epistemology	Empiricism	Rationalism	Sociohistoricism/ Pragmatism
Traditions and source of concepts contributing	Associationism	Gestalt psychology	'Lave and Wenger'
	Behaviourism Connectionism	Constructivism Symbolic information processing Zone of Proximal Development	Communities of Practice Legitimate peripheral participation
Knowing as…	having associations affecting behaviour	conceptual development cognitive abilities personally meaningful	distributed and embodied through community practices
Learning as…	an organised accumulation of associations and components of skills	understanding of concepts and theories in different subject matter domains, and general cognitive abilities	becoming more adept at participating in distributed cognitive systems, focusing on engagement that maintains the person's interpersonal relations and identity in communities in which the person participates
Learning and Transfer	• Acquiring and applying associations • Behavioural and attitudinal change	• Acquiring and using conceptual and cognitive structures	• Initiation and induction • Becoming attuned to constraints and affordances through participation • Shared repertoire between the community
Motivation and Engagement	Extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation	Engaged participation Legitimation
Focus of Accountability and Assessment	External	Individual	Community

Note: This Table is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

cumulative, and goal-oriented process. The learner is positioned as the key agent rather than a passive recipient in a teaching situation. It is a conception of learning supported by and which extends humanistic and Enlightenment-style arguments for fostering a high level of involvement of children and youth in the construction of their learning and decision-making about it (see Chapter 11 by Schnack, this volume). However, as in the development field, it also serves to draw attention towards economic and efficiency-style arguments about how best to achieve learning, i.e. inauthentic, tokenistic forms of participation in learning will not suffice, according to these criteria. Thus, the learner's active participation is not just a desirable emancipatory boon; rather, as in development, it is viewed as a necessity for learning to occur, to last, and be both effective and efficient. Put starkly, rote learning has no place in participatory learning.

Situative perspectives on learning, in contrast, relocate the focus on the individual by emphasising the communal and relational aspects of the individual's participation in learning. Thus, while cognitive theories have emphasised the active involvement of the individual, from a situative perspective we must consider active involvement in terms of 'participation in a community'. Typically, this is termed a community of practice or action (see, for example, Chapter 19 by Shallcross and Robinson, this volume), and it is widely regarded as a necessity for learning processes and outcomes to be marked by the same outcomes listed earlier, that is, without an active engagement with/in a community over the longer term, participatory learning risks becoming disembedded and incoherent, in relation to the learners, the processes, and the outcomes.

Table 3.2 presents distinctive positions on the focus and motivation for participating, but it also serves to illustrate some of the common ground that emerges across them. A key feature of the table is that each perspective shares the position that one's capacity to participate is learnt, constructed and dynamic – and thus can be enhanced (rather than being regarded as something that it is, for example, largely inherited, fixed, or stable). A key implication of this view, as with the shift in conceptions of childhood and development, is that schools, teachers, learners, and communities, can make a profound difference, positive and/or negative, to an individual's capacity to participate in formal, informal, and non-formal learning contexts (for further discussion, see Arnot and Reay 2001; Fielding 2001; Kirby 2001; and for specific examples related to environment-related learning, Hart 1997; Hart 2000; Brierley *et al.* 2002).

Indeed, as Greeno *et al.* (1996:16) note:

> All three [perspectives] … have contributed, and continue to contribute, important insights to fundamental scientific knowledge and understanding of cognition and learning and have influenced educational practices significantly. While each perspective is valuable, they frame theoretical and practical issues in distinctive and complementary ways ….

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 also illustrate some of the potential ambiguities associated with the notion of participation as a concept-in-use in education, alongside differences in their epistemological groundings, and the diversity of views available on knowing, knowledge and learning, motivation and engagement, purposes of learning and

Table 3.2 Learning perspectives and participation, as applied to examples of environment-related learning. (Adapted from Greeno *et al*. 1996.)

Perspective	Behaviourist	Cognitive	Situative
Focus on…	participation in socially acceptable behaviours e.g. *can recycle*	participation in one's own learning process: Concept of metacognition as 'capacity to reflect upon one's own thinking, and thereby to monitor and manage it'… 'self- conscious management of one's own learning and thinking processes' (p. 19) 'beliefs and understanding of themselves as *knowing agents*' (p. 19) e.g. *understand recycling processes and imperatives and links to other environmental issues and themes*	participation in practices of communities Collective knowing (groups are composed of individuals and considering knowing as abilities of groups in their practice) *individual knowing* (considering knowing of individuals as their ability to participate in those practices) …participation in social practices is needed for learning and knowing (apprenticeship learning) participation and identity linked e.g. *action competence displayed through socially critical actions related to recycling* (e.g. *investigating the benefits and drawbacks of reducing and reduced consumption*)
Motivation for active participation in the learning examples	'Engagement in activities can also be considered as a decision based on expected utilities of outcomes of the engagement, which depend on the individual's subjective probabilities and utilities regarding outcomes of alternative participation in different ways in learning activities.' (p. 24) e.g *via positive and negative reinforcement*	'Engagement is often considered to be a person's intrinsic interest in a domain of cognitive activities.…' (p. 25) Elements of intrinsic motivations might be: challenge, fantasy, curiosity e.g. *via problem- solving and inquiry*	'Students can become engaged in learning by participating in communities where learning is valued.' (p. 26) e.g. *learning one's native language, learning to read well in order to access cultural and s ocial capital* Identity is viewed as critical to engagement in learning activities. In other words, 'the motivation to learn the values and practices of the community of learners is tied up with establishing their identities as community members.' (p. 26) e.g. *informal as well as formal learning experiences*

Note: This table is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

assessment, and so forth. Thus, while comparison can help distinguish one particular perspective on participation from another (in terms of participating in one's own learning and that of others, for example), a sole focus on one approach or perspective can occlude the possibility or desirability of pursuing others. Consequently, while some perspectives clearly complement others at some points, other aspects of participation and learning remain distinctive and conspicuous by their stark contrast and relative incompatibility with other understandings (see Chapter 19, by Shallcross and Robinson, as an example). This situation lends support to the notion that different modes and approaches to participation in environmental learning are required, i.e. there is no single best approach for all situations.

The risk in all this is similar to that in the field of development: participation in education becomes a widely used and fashionable term, degraded in its meanings and uses. For example, in England, participation and citizenship in schools are often equated, but the curriculum and the structures of schooling tend to limit conceptions of participation towards the formal mechanisms of democracy (an education in civics and schools councils, for example), rather than engage with broader or alternative notions, like participatory democracy and ecological citizenship (see later, and Chapter 20 by Carlsson and Sanders, this volume). Taking account of diverse perspectives on learning is clearly one possibility for helping evaluate instances of participation and participatory education in the fields of environment, health, and sustainability. But we argue that this situation demands that other social, political, ideological, and instrumental functions underlying their presence in environment-related learning should also be considered and explored. We illustrate these possibilities in the next section, laying out the groundwork for developing an analytical framework for evaluating participation and participatory approaches in environment-related learning.

3.5 Why do Participation?

> Even if we know someone else, and know ourselves, we still have to grasp the "truth of our interrelationship, the truth of the unitary and unique event which links us and in which we are participants" (Bakhtin 1993:17). Accordingly, to understand an object means that we have to understand our "ought" in this relationship, the attitude or position that we ought to take with respect to it and other individuals. For our participation in interaction, we are responsible; each act "presupposes my answerable participation, and not an abstracting from myself. It is only from within my participation that Being can be understood as an event, but this moment of once-occurrent participant does not exist inside the content seen in abstraction from the act qua answerable deed" (Bakhtin 1993:18). We are answerable for each act, every moment of our lives, every act is an answerable act: life itself "can be consciously comprehended only in concrete answerability" (Bakhtin 1993:56).
> (Roth 2003, para. 40)

In the preceding part of this chapter, we outlined some of the conceptual distinctions that might encourage a comparative evaluation of participation as a concept-in-use in both theory and practice in environment-related learning, and

that might also assist in the evaluation of various instances of participatory approaches in this field. To reiterate our main purposes in this chapter and to pull together some of the threads of the preceding sections, we note that Rapoport (1985:256) observes:

> Conceptual frameworks are neither models nor theories. Models describe how things work, whereas theories explain phenomena. Conceptual frameworks do neither; rather they help to think about phenomena, to order material, revealing patterns – and pattern recognition typically leads to models and theories.

As suggested earlier, the sites and routes for how one might evaluate participation-related phenomena are potentially wide ranging, given that participation exists in a variety of forms in the 'dreams, mouths, and lives' of its advocates and critics, as well as those of the participants (or in some cases, 'recipients') of these processes. Furthermore, the political 'gravity' that may accrue to such an evaluative task becomes apparent in that, if achieved successfully, it may present serious challenges to a range of interests (including the vested or entrenched), of those for or against a particular practice, model, theory, or ideal, in participatory environment-related learning.

For us, the conceptually, ethically, and philosophically loaded quotation that opens this section illustrates one particular way in which those interested in participation can be invited to inquire and reflect deeply on the ethical purposes of education and the qualities of participation and participatory approaches in teaching and learning. Whether one understands or agrees with Roth (2003) or not, an understanding of teaching and learning that is informed by such considerations reveals that teaching and learning convey a serious ethical enterprise, exhibiting substantial ontological, epistemological, and relational dimensions, i.e. in terms of what it means or might mean to be, know and interact in a participatory learning situation. As Simovska (2000, and Chapter 4 by Simovska, this volume) argues, this is where we might begin to distinguish the authentic and inauthentic, as well as the genuine and tokenistic, in participatory activities and discourses of participation.

Given this, developing a rigorous yet open evaluative framework for participation can require practitioners, advocates, and researchers to think *with* participatory discourse, but also to think *beyond* it and *against* it. Thus, in relation to any particular 'utterance' or 'articulation' of a discourse of participation, we would do well to consider asking, how fixed or culturally accepted is that pattern of meaning for participation (in theory and practice), and what are the expectations and justifications for what counts as participation? In addressing such questions, we use this section of the chapter to illustrate how a set of 'typological heuristics', in the form of key questions, might be developed to promote a critical appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of different expressions of participation in environmental learning. We then illustrate its application, to draw attention to some of the conceptual, theoretical, and political commitments and contexts, as well as the ideological and pedagogic groundings of participatory approaches, to open up considerations for analysis of the potential for 'tyranny' and 'transformation' in participation in the area of environment-related learning (see also Cooke and Kothari 2001; Bühler 2002; Hickey and Mohan 2004).

3.6 Developing an Evaluative Framework for Complex and Contested Concepts

Our approach in working towards an evaluative framework for understanding diverse expressions of participation has been to develop a set of analytical questions. We have drawn on the methodological work of Andrew Dobson (1998, 2001) who uses this approach for analysing environmental politics in relation to concepts of distributive justice. It requires identifying and delineating a set of 'Principal Organising Questions' (POQs); these are the kinds of questions that a comprehensive delineation of a concept should be able to answer or address (see Table 3.3). In Dobson's case, the POQs are developed in relation to two key concepts: *environmental sustainability* and *social justice*. Dobson organises the possible responses to the POQs that constitute both key concepts in relation to three conceptions of environmental sustainability and dimensions of social justice, and then uses this to work towards a typology, combining and discussing the compatibility of the conceptions with different responses to the dimensions of social justice. Thus Dobson's aim is to demonstrate how grouping various responses to questions through a combination of questions and 'family-related answers' will lead to a limited number of viable and comprehensive conceptions for his typology.

In clarifying the aims of this typological process, Dobson argues that developing an analytical framework for dealing with concepts that are vague, complex, and contested is preferable to simply cataloguing them. In this case, he focuses on the diverse conceptions of sustainable development, inspecting the literature on the concept and the discursive differentiations made vis-à-vis *social justice* and *environmental sustainability*. He claims that this analytical method, which he applied originally in the context of environmental sustainability and sustainable development, is 'in practice applicable to any political-theoretical concept', (Dobson 2001:62) including, by his own extension, participation and environment-related learning, e.g. in the area of ecological citizenship.

Dobson's intention for such a framework, *sensu* Rapoport, is to enable the development of 'a typology of theories' about the concept under investigation. The

Table 3.3 Asking questions about environmental sustainability and social justice. (Adapted from Dobson 1998:39, 63.)

Questions addressed in a conceptualisation of environmental sustainability	Dimensions of a conceptualisation of social justice
What to sustain?	What is the community of justice? (dispensers, recipients)
Why?	What is the basic structure (the options)?
How?	What is distributed?
Objects of concern (primary/secondary)?	What is the principle of distribution?
Substitutability between human-made and natural capital?	

development of such a typology entails that the components of the concept under study are made explicit. Dobson claims that the key advantages of such an analytical approach are: first, typologies do not go out of date immediately; and second, typologies provide plural answers to contested concepts, which by their very nature, guarantee and promote plural understandings. Of course, typologies may serve programmatic and normative purposes, but Dobson's overarching purpose is to sidestep this as via a focus on heuristics, he is able to provide a form of orientation for finding one's way around the territory of a multiply interpretable concept, rather than propose fixed meanings, or police them. This is achieved by developing a typological heuristic that should provide comprehensive coverage of its multiple and possible meanings and interpretations. Thus, in this case, a suitably and successfully developed typology could be regarded as the basis for a mapping tool that can then be used to explicate and orientate assumptions about a concept. Thus whilst remembering that the map is not the territory, the ability to make and understand maps is more the order of the day with a POQ approach.

Thus to develop a POQ-based typological framework, Dobson (1998:37) explains that in his reading of the literature on environmental policy he was guided by the question, 'What are the implicit or explicit questions being asked in these texts?' This led to a list of questions to which any 'theory' (e.g. as one 'utterance' from an array of actual and possible utterances) about a certain concept can be subjected. Differences in interpretation and understandings of the key concepts are explained as shifting and alternative answers to the questions. This, he argues, brings more clarification to the debate over vague concepts (such as sustainable development) as controversial components can be more easily identified. The questions are then used to compose a framework for the grouping of various answers, where 'a combination of questions and "family-related answers" will lead to a limited number of conceptions' (ibid). (To see this in practice, see Dobson's work in Tables 3.3 and 3.4.)

We initially followed Dobson's methodological approach in terms of developing a set of POQs for the concept of 'participation' in a learning context, primarily in light of the literature and material represented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, but also in relation to the literature discussed elsewhere throughout this book. However, instead of following Dobson's approach to the letter in attempting to identify a limited number of conceptions,[1] our focus has been on clarifying POQs for participation.

As a result, we have categorised a preliminary list of POQs into three broad levels of typological 'interrogation': a level that questions practicalities, a level for explicating underlying theoretical perspectives, and a level of questioning that

[1] This would have required, for example, (a) developing POQs for a second key concept – environment-related learning – which is beyond the scope of our purposes in this chapter, although see Scott and Gough 2003 and Nikel 2005 for some discussion here, as well as (b) connecting the various responses together, few of which seemed to be able to withstand critical scrutiny because they were neither extensive nor robust enough.

Table 3.4 Principal Organising Questions and 'answers' for the sustainable development community. (Based on material from Dobson 1998.)

POQs for environmental sustainability	'Answer' from the sustainable development community	POQs for social justice	'Answer' from the sustainable development community
What to sustain?	*Critical Natural Capital*	What is the community of justice?	*All human beings*
		Dispensers?	*Present and future generation of human beings*
		Recipients?	
Why?	*Human welfare*	What is the basic structure (options)?	*International and intergenerational justice, predicated on impartial, consequentialist and universal theories of justice*
How?	*Renewing/substituting/protecting* *An instrumental attitude to the value of the non-human natural world*	What is distributed?	*Environmental goods and bads*
Objects of concern (primary/secondary)	1. *Privileges present and future generation human needs over human wants*, 2. *Present generation non-human needs, future generation non-human needs*	What is the principle of distribution?	*Needs*
Substitutability between human-made and natural capital	*Not always possible between human-made capital and critical natural capital*		

looks towards meta-theoretical horizons. We will return to this later, but for now we note that evaluating participatory education discourses and practices across all three dimensions rather than one or another also encouraged our critical consideration of (a) their grounding in and appeals to epistemological and ideological perspectives about learning (e.g. Greeno *et al*. 1996), (b) how they are exposed to 'power relations and structures' (Hickey and Mohan 2004), and (c) how they mobilise different conceptions of environment and sustainable development (Dobson 1998). This can be considered as both an extension to and rupturing of Dobson's methodology, while attempts to delineate more specific conceptions of participation in relation to

environmental, health, and sustainability education must remain a goal for further work, for example, when the literature affords such a comparative approach (see footnote 1).

3.7 Developing an Heuristic for Investigating Participation in Environment-Related Learning

With Dobson's procedures in mind then, we developed a set of possible POQs for addressing the various components of participation in theorising and practising environment-related learning. We reviewed a range of literature associated with the RIPEN initiative (Research in Participatory Education Network, described in Chapter 1, this volume) regarding participation in environmental and health education, and used database, library, and citation-index searches on key terms. The outcomes of this process are presented in the left hand column in Table 3.5. The questions address the following components towards identifying a comprehensive conception of participation:

- Defining and delimiting participation
- The nature of participation and non-participation
- Participation criteria
- Selection of participants
- Nature of activity to participate in
- Participants' individual contributions
- Justification for participation
- Expressions of hegemony in participatory settings
- Decision-making in participatory settings
- Participants' views on participation

Analysing a participatory programme or activity through these POQs should aid the identification of key components of a conceptualisation of participation at a number of levels. However, in operating as a heuristic device, it is not meant to imply that the various elements in the table are discrete; indeed, the interaction and interrelationship of responses across questions can be key to understanding patterns in conceptions of participatory education theory and practice, including the initiation, conceptualisation, and outcomes of such activities, within a case study, and across case studies.

The right hand column in Table 3.5 illustrates the range of responses we found in our literature set, and owing to their variety, as yet we have not been able to identify specific, coherent, and separate conceptions (suggesting perhaps that further conceptual analysis and open debate are required in this field). More importantly, the range gives a vivid impression of the diverse settings and activities that are possible under the broad umbrella of participation and participatory learning in environment-related learning, and the components that go to

Table 3.5 POQs and participation in environment-related learning

POQs for participation	Exemplar ranges of response
Who defines what we call participation? *cf. How would you recognise a group of people participating?*	organiser, participants, sponsor, state, industry, political activist… *language, education, dominant discourse…*
What/who is implicated in participating? *How is participation happening already?* *How will/might participation happen?*	people/resources/materials… *as learners as individuals (age, gender, role…)* *as individuals as members of group institutions* *as communities (how defined/identified?)* *as present generation (PG) human beings (HBs)* *as future generation (FG) HBs* *PG sentients and/or FG sentients* *PG non-sentients and/or FG non-sentients…*
What is the degree of freedom that the participant has to participate? *Who is not participating and why not?*	compulsory or voluntary participation…, *not participating as a positive choice or option* *not participating as a negative choice or option…*
What are the criteria for being a participant?	as an individual, as a representative of a sub group, as an official representative (formal role)…
What is the basic structure of the conceptualisation of the participation?	procedural – consequentialist substantive – impartial particular – universal…
Participation in what?	in teaching/learning process (classroom activity, projects) as own learning process, as small group learning (family, peer group)…, in community development in society development in global development in political processes, in preservation, conservation, restoration…
How important is the participants' participation within the complete process?	at the level of consultation, taking part, being involved in decision-making, having a say, synergy…
How is the participation justified, if at all?	efficiency/effectiveness…
(criteria for legitimacy)	morality: *autonomy, community, solidarity, well-being/health of individual and/or society…,*

(continued)

Table 3.5 (continued)

POQs for participation	Exemplar ranges of response
	intertextuality/intersubjectivity *(influence of past forces or others on present)*
	… spirituality (*sensitivity, sacredness, communion, stewardship, suffering, compassion, goodness, love, hope, existence…*)
Whose (rather than what) reality counts in the process of participation? (*people, knowledges and powers*)	…dominant discourse and legitimated voices…
	…*role of mediators, facilitators and interpreters*
	…*structure of the process of decision-making*
	…*sources of information and access to it…*
How is the process of decision-making organised?	…priority given to whom or what? …
	…*an individual has priority* (e.g. *teacher*)
What construction of democracy is underlying the process?	…*majority decides*
	…*discussion until common agreement*
	…*everybody counts the same*
	…*a quota/critical mass*
	…*majority decision takes account of minority rights…*
What is the participants' view on the role of their participation within the process of environment-related learning?	degree of personal/moral/social/ecological/etc. impact, meaningfulness and relevance… e.g. *ownership, economic incentive, nature, conservation, social change, learning, compulsion….*

constitute the elements of a typology in this field. For example, environment-related learning in the past has been differentiated as either education *about* the environment, education *in* the environment, or education *for* the environment; it will be interesting to see whether learning and teaching as part of the UN Decade of ESD (2005–2014) will provide ample data and grounds for delineating the constitutive components of ESD approaches in similar ways in relation to participation.

To test out the POQs in the framework, we conclude this chapter with an illustration of their application to an 'Expertise' report ordered by the *Bund-Länder-Kommision* (BLK) *für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung* (State–Federal States-Commission for educational planning and research promotion) in Germany. Our choice here depends more on our perception of its interest value and potential to illuminate the issues of conceptualising and evaluating participation in environment-related learning, than on its representativeness for the field in general (Stake 1995).

3.8 Applying the Framework to ESD Policy and Frameworks in Germany

The term, *Expertise*, refers to a report written by 'experts' (such as academics) with professional experience and expertise in an area, and usually involves advice and opinion based on evaluation and analysis of prior work and research to inform future projects and innovations in that field. In this example, the *Expertise* document is positioned as central to the upcoming preparation of a *Förderprogramm* (supporting strategy) for implementing and disseminating ESD as an 'innovative task' in schools across Germany (de Haan and Harenberg 1999). For further details, see de Haan (2006) and Bolscho and Hauenschild (2006).

The *Expertise* documentation contains evaluation, discussion, and recommendations on policy, planning, and implementation, and is addressed to people with responsibility for ESD (e.g. federal and state officials, researchers, and environmental educators), and members of the public with an interest in the field, including teachers (*fachinteressierte Öffentlichkeit*).

Significantly for this document, sustainable development is viewed as a 'concept of modernisation' (*Modernisierungskonzept)*. The terminology signals a set of technical, economical, political, and social tasks in creating/modifying/modelling/forming/designing the future of society (*Gestaltungsauftrag*) (de Haan and Harenberg 1999:62). In other words, experts argue that sustainable development is a complex task for individuals and institutions, amongst others, of (re)creating society that combines the global and local dimensions of *Zukunftsgestaltung* (the creation/modification of the future). Citizens' competence is required in communication and decision-making processes (p. 62), while more specifically, *Gestaltungskompetenz für nachhaltige Entwicklung* relates to the necessity of developing a citizen's 'modelling competence' for sustainable development. This *Gestaltungskompetenz* involves citizens working as participants who look ahead, planning the way forward for a society. It articulates the belief that people can and must create and plan for the future in an optimistic way, rather than looking backwards or viewing the future or people's capacity pessimistically, in the face of the ongoing, and in many cases, deepening socioecological crisis.

Three major 'lesson planning and organisational principles' (*Unterrichts und Organisationsprinzipien*) are presented in the *Expertise* to achieve the overall goal of *Gestaltungskompetenz*. These are:

1. Interdisciplinary knowledge (*interdisziplinäres Wissen*)
2. Participatory learning (*Partizipatives Lernen*), and
3. Innovative structures (*Innovative Strukturen*) with particular emphasis on school profile (corporate identity), learning organisations, and cooperation with the outside/wider community

Participation as a term is most explicitly mentioned in relation to the second principle, 'participatory learning'. The *Expertise* calls for further development and

evaluation of various methods and forms of participatory learning, arguing, for instance, that in the best of circumstances, it is not experienced as an occasional event but as an integrated part of daily school practice. A variety of learning methods are recommended, such as interdisciplinary learning arrangements, projects with practical application, self-initiated and self-directed learning, learning in different groupings and teams, and learning situations such as Agenda 21-type 'futures workshops' and planning projects – each of which may use a variety of participatory tools, such as interactive presentations, games, simulations, and group work (pp. 64–65). 'Participatory learning' is further operationalised in relation to four aspects (pp. 77–82) which suggest a focus on modelling the 'sustainable city'; investigating rural areas and regions as a key stimulus for learning about sustainable development in the round; participating in Agenda 21-related activities; and participating in a locally based process of identifying, developing, and using sustainability indicators.

In order to test out the POQs in terms of their scope and value for analysis and evaluation, the *Expertise* has been reviewed in light of the typology's questions and components. We set out our analysis in Table 3.6, right hand column.

In accordance with the explicit purpose of an analytical framework, we asked ourselves whether and in what ways it had fulfilled our expectations, as a mapping tool for explicating and orientating assumptions about conceptions of participation in environment-related learning in this particular document.

Working through the document guided by the framework's questions suggested a number of issues that we may not have otherwise recognised. We highlight two here for the purposes of our discussion. On page 20 of the *Expertise*, one reads that citizens' commitment to sustainable development as a modernisation concept is vital. Therefore, to implement and fulfil Agenda 21 it is important to increase the 'participation of groups in society who have not participated as much so far or who have not yet been considered (e.g. children, youth, women)' [our translation and paraphrasing throughout this section]. In the first instance one might question the contents of the list in parenthesis, namely 'women', 'youth', and 'children'. Each group is involved with daily decisions about, for example, consumption, transportation, work…de facto, they are 'participating' in key aspects of sustainable development, so why draw attention to these categories? On page 80, the authors of the *Expertise* offer a resolution when they are more explicit about 'participation in what?' It becomes clear that the authors use the term 'participation' and 'to participate' only in a specific context, namely, in relation to Agenda 21 and Local Agenda 21. In more detail, it is about processes of consultation in setting up a Local Agenda project (including communication processes, decision-making processes, and evaluation) and in the support for this at the level of small communities in local communities, rather than in education and/or daily life *per se*. Arguably, children, youth, and women appear to be less represented or involved in local, collaborative planning, and in the implementation work of Agenda 21 (via Local Agenda 21). Hence they are targeted for inclusion in the programme (cf. Chapter 9 by Læssøe, on sustainable development and participation, and Chapter 20 by Carlsson and Sanders, this volume, on the notion of the 'everyday maker').

Table 3.6 ESD and participation

POQs for participation	Responses in BLK programme 'Expertise'*
Who defines what we call participation? *cf. How would you recognise a group of people participating?*	*Agenda 21* (*and expert interpretation of it*): 'Participation is a central idea of the Agenda processes. Without involvement in decision-making processes, without changing lifestyles and without interest in global justice, sustainable development is not realised…. It has a second meaning which involves the ability of having a sense of community (*Fähigkeit zur Gemeinschaftlichkeit*), a sense of helping and supporting communities on a local and global level…participation is also almost impossible without the ability to solve conflicts' (pp. 62–63)[2] 'The Principle of Participation' (*der Grundsatz der Partizipation*): '…all people "having a share"/"involved"/ "affected" (*alle Beteiligten*) have to be included according to legal possibilities and according to their ability in an equal way. (p. 93)[3] Sub-question: Who is deciding that participation is needed? …according to the common opinion of the expert world and political agents….[4]
What/who is implicated in participating?	Politicians Pedagogical experts
How is participation happening already?	Citizens (having competences)
How will/might participation happen?	Groups in society which have not been participating as much so far or have not been considered (e.g. children, youths, women)[5]
What is the degree of freedom that the participant has to participate?	Not addressed (more: access to participation has to be ensured, no consideration about not participating) – sustainable development is seen as a society-wide task to create/to model/to modify society/ future (*Gestaltungsauftrag*)[6]
Who is not participating and why not?	– 'All people having a share have to be involved…' According to 'the principle of participation', all people having a share have to be included according to legal possibilities and according to their ability in an equal way. (p. 93)
What are the criteria for being a participant?	Being citizen; everybody; 'all people having a share' (*alle Beteiligten*)
What is the basic structure of the conceptualisation of the participation?	'Substantive' in terms of Agenda 21; 'procedural' in terms of creativity and learning activities, and development of local indicators, but also 'consequentialist' in terms of application of pre-specified or general indicators;

(continued)

Table 3.6 (continued)

POQs for participation	Responses in BLK programme 'Expertise'*
	'universalist' view of all needing to participate though developing 'particularist' competences within a general drive for *Gestaltungskompetenz* across different members of society (e.g. youth will contribute differently to adults)
Participation in what?	The term 'participation' as a term is specifically named in relation to participating in… 1. 'Processes of consultancy aiming to setting up a local agenda project'[7]…including communication processes, decision-making processes, evaluation 2. 'Support at the level of small communities in local community' (solidarity and activity)[8] (see Agenda 21) Implicit emphasis in participation in relation to:…search for innovative solutions, change in consumption, process of reflection
How important is the participants' participation within the complete process?	To model and modify (*gestalten*), to implement, to evaluate[9]
How is the participation justified, if at all?	Necessity for success as modernisation concept (*Modernisierungskonzept*) of society, 'inevitable'
(criteria for legitimacy)	(Education – not seen as additive and therefore maybe it can be left out)
Whose (rather than what) reality counts in the process of participation? (*people, knowledges and powers*)	Agenda 21
	The expert world
	Principle of Participation
	Competent citizens
How is the process of decision-making organised?	Not stated but two other processes in addition to decision-making are emphasised:
What construction of democracy is underlying the process?	• Process of communication and processes of decision-making
	• Implementation and evaluation of sustainable development
	…competences required to participate
What is the participants' view on the role of their participation within the process of environment-related learning?	Not expressed (as it is a policy document) It will be meaningful for them through 'effect on daily life' and 'relevance for future' (*alltagsorientiert, zukunftsrelevant*)

* Expert work on the BLK Programme 'Education for Sustainable Development' (de Haan and Harenberg 1999)

[2] *Partizipation ist ein zentrales Leitbild des Agenda-Prozesses. Ohne Teilhabe an Entscheidungsprozessen für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung, ohne veränderte Lebensstile und das Interesse an globaler Gerechtigkeit, so wird immer wieder betont, sei die nachhaltige Entwicklung nicht zu realisieren….*

(continued)

Table 3.6 (continued)

Der Begriff verfügt über eine zweite Bedeutung. Diese wird sichtbar, wenn man sich auf die Gerechtigkeitsthematik in der Expertise Förderprogramm Agenda 21 konzentriert: Es ist dieses die Fähigkeit zur Gemeinschaftlichkeit, zur Hilfe und Unterstützung im Nahbereich wie das Verstehen, die Verständigung mit und Unterstützung von fremden Kulturen..... Partizipation ist zudem ohne die Fähigkeit zur Konfliktlösung in einer pluralen Gesellschaft kaum möglich. (pp. 62–63).

[3] *Soll der Grundsatz der Partizipation verwirklicht werden, müssen alle Beteiligten im Einklang mit rechtlichen Möglichkeiten und entsprechend ihrer Fähigkeiten gleichberechtigt einbezogen werden: neben den interessierten Lehrern ebenso Schüler und Eltern* (p. 93) – the principle was mentioned in an explanation of the organisational structure of the overall BLK programme.

[4] *Im Zuge der Entwicklung zur Nachhaltigkeit als Modernisierungskonzept ist – nach einhelliger Meinung der Fachwelt und auch der politischen Akteure – ein intensiviertes Engagement der Bürger unverzichtbar.*

[5] *Bisher wenig beteiligter oder berücksichtigter Bevölkerungsgruppen (z.B. Kinder, Jugendliche, Frauen)* (p. 20).

[6] *Als gesellschaftlichen Gestaltungsauftrag den Bürgern erhebliche Fähigkeiten…bei der Beteiligung an Verständigungs- und Entscheidungsprozessen abverlangt* (p. 62).

[7] *Konsultationsprozesse mit dem Ziel einzuleiten sind, eine lokale Agenda zu erstellen* (p. 80).

[8] *Unterstützung auf der Ebene der kleinen Gemeinschaften, Gemeinsinn and Teilhabe* (p. 77).

[9] *Partizipationsfähigkeit: Bereitschaft, sich an Planungen, Projekten und Programmen mitgestaltend zu beteiligen* (p. 59).

The document also draws on 'the principle of participation' (*der Grundsatz der Partizipation*): that '…all people "having a share"/"involved"/"affected" (*alle Beteiligten*) have to be included according to legal possibilities and according to their ability in an equal way' (p. 92). The principle is mentioned within an explanation of how the overall BLK programme might be structured to ensure broad involvement at the school level. Perhaps not unsurprisingly for a policy document, no reference is provided as to the derivation of 'the principle'. But we have to ask, who defined it? Who designated it a principle? And, what meanings are intended?

The principle is discussed in the text in ways that suggest there are legal considerations, ability considerations, and issues of equality in deciding whom to include or exclude in the participation. Here too the choice of words raises interesting questions and tensions. The 'population' from which a selective decision has to be made is described as *alle Beteiligte*. This is a highly plastic phrase and requires qualification as the term can refer to 'persons concerned', 'persons involved', 'persons having a share in', 'persons having a part', 'persons having an interest', 'persons who contribute to', and 'persons to help in'. Consider a motor vehicle accident. The term *alle Beteiligte* refers to all those involved, including any eyewitnesses. It does not differentiate or delimit the status or role of the participants. As such, it raises questions as to the grounds on which participation is to be understood to require people in bringing their own 'interest/s' or 'concern/s' with them, rather than rely solely on those of, for example, the policymaker, educator, or convenor of the participatory event. Related questions

include whether it might mean that participation requires explicitly defined 'shares' in the process, event, or outcome, and 'parts' for people to play within these; and whether participation necessarily involves activities such as helping out, or if it can be considered equally legitimate to be a bystander, onlooker, or observer as a 'participant' in, by extension, sustainable development.

In our concluding comments we return to the relationships and interconnections between the POQs, and the implications these have for using such evaluative frameworks in relation to conceptions and examples of participation.

3.9 Identifying the Levels and Depth of POQs

The list of POQs in Table 3.5 represents a collection of possible analytical questions. In our attempt to further clarify similarities and differences between the questions, and consequently to group the questions in light of their use with the BLK example, we can consider who might ask a particular question, and what distinctive assumptions underlie each one?

To reframe the POQ framework along these lines leads to a differentiation that distinguishes between questions at a more descriptive level, questions driven by certain theoretical assumptions, and finally questions that look towards a meta-theoretical perspective.

Table 3.7 groups the questions and suggests that one can analyse and evaluate a conceptualisation of participation, participatory programme, or activity, at at least

Table 3.7 Three levels of questions for analysing participation

Level 1: Practice level–- delineating the practicalities of engagement	
Related POQs	Participation in what? How is participation happening already? How important is the participants' participation within the complete process? What are the criteria for being a participant? How is the process of decision-making organised? What is the participants' view on the role of their participation within the process of environment-related learning?
Level 2: Theory Level – delineating the participation by engaging in theoretical, epistemological, and ideological theories	
Related POQs	What construction or understanding of democracy underlies the decision-making process? What is the basic structure of the conceptualisation of the participation? How will/might participation happen? How is the participation justified, if at all? (criteria for legitimacy)
Level 3: Meta-theoretical Level – delineating the involvement, outcomes, and impacts	
Related POQs	Who defines what we call participation? Who/what is implicated in participating? What is the degree of freedom the participant has to participate? Who is not participating and why not? How would you recognise a group of people participating here? Whose (rather than what) reality counts in the process of participation?

three levels. Questions at the first level attempt to address a variety of issues related to the practicalities of participation. They are akin to a description of a research study where research instruments, sampling, and data collection procedures are described comprehensively but without reference to guiding theories or research paradigms.

Questions contributing to the second level inquire into such theories and assumptions, in terms of what may have guided or influenced decisions and work at the level of practice. It may be that the conceptualisation or practical approach is informed by more than one theory or model, and these may not always be in harmony. For example, theoretical assumptions about what constitutes 'democratic' in a decision-making process, or what constitutes learning (see Table 3.1), can vary immensely, and a simple iteration of the possibilities suggests that some will fit well with the other, while others will be in tension.

Finally, questions at the third-level prompt consideration of the degree to which the example of participation illustrates an attentiveness towards acknowledging, challenging, or transcending hegemonic structures, discourses, and practices. Adding this meta-level signals that evaluation might make a direct response to the kinds of critique of participatory work from the development field in which, for example, Rahnema (1992) pointed to the risk of participation and declaimed participatory approaches acting solely as a deceptive myth or a dangerous tool for manipulation.

Returning to our earlier comments then, we can suggest that in light of this, current conceptualisations and practices of participatory environment-related learning do not necessarily address, focus on, or take into account these issues as they relate to all three levels. Thus, we would also suggest that responding to each group of questions and examining the interplay of the levels may go some way towards helping analyse and evaluate that which determines the outcomes of participatory planning, implementation, and evaluation in education, particularly as it relates to education, the environment, health, and sustainability.

The third group of questions in particular has become an increasingly important matter for shared awareness within development studies, and tackling the issues they raise is often perceived as a way forward for participation and participatory processes – out of tyranny towards transformation (Hickey and Mohan 2004:4). However, as yet, such an awareness is not as recognisable in environment-related learning discourses that invoke conceptualisations and practices of participation, and thus in the attempt to plug this gap and stimulate further research and debate, we hope the POQs outlined here, and the process by which they were developed, may be of value to all those interested in practising and developing participatory environment-related learning.

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