

***“It’s so good just to
be”: Understanding
Children’s Rights
Through Pedagogic
Practice in Hungary***

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Research Question and Objectives

- **Polyvocal, multi-modal case study**

Q: In what way are children's rights explored and understood in the Hungarian kindergarten context?

Objectives:

1. To support and facilitate Hungarian pedagogues to enable child-led activities in order to elicit children's voices (via a toolkit of activities), views and understandings about their rights
2. To bring together views from children to ascertain what is important to them and why
3. To map children's narratives against the UNCRC rights articles of protection, participation and provision.
4. To develop a right-respecting pedagogical approach in Hungarian kindergartens that considers the child's voice and sensitive to children's needs
5. To establish child-centred practice from a research informed rights-based rationale nationally

Our ambition

to contribute to and inform the universal approach to implement the 2030 European Parliament aspiration which is set to protect and promote children's rights

- **SDG4.2** (4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education) and **UNCRC Article 18.3** (children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible)
- **SDG4.a** (Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all) and **Article 23.1**. (a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community)
- **SDG11.7** (By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces) and **Article 31.1** (the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.)

Where are we now?

Preparing the
Toolkit

Sep-Dec 2020

Pilot
Jan-Feb 2021

Preparation for
main study & data
generation March-
June 2021

Data analysis -
Findings

July-Dec 2021

Disseminating
Findings

Jan- Oct 2022



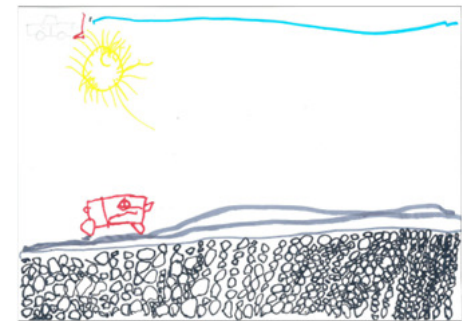
A Toolkit for the pedagogues...

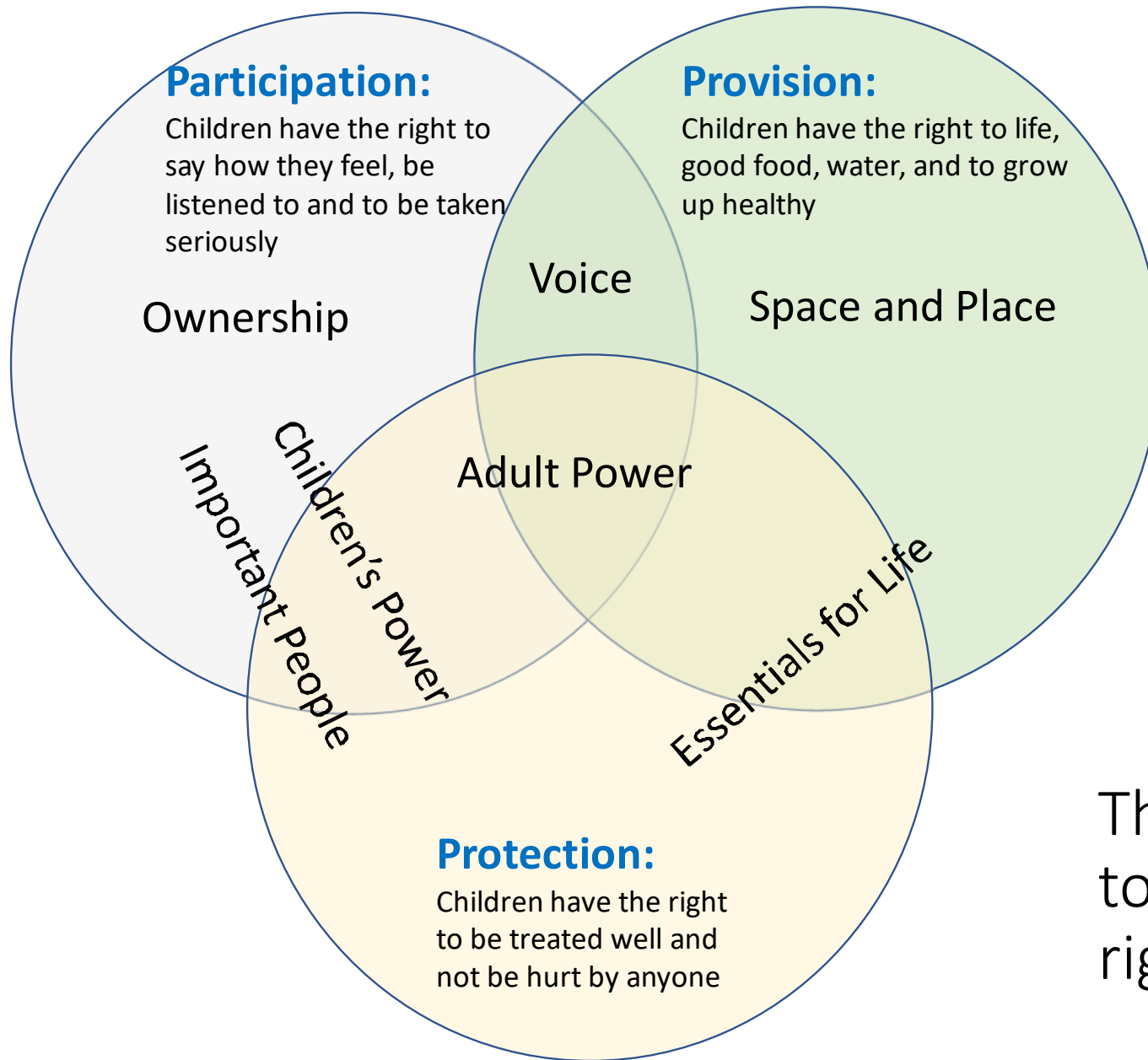
Pilot and Main study

- 115 pedagogues expressed an interest from 30 kindergartens nationally



- 56 pedagogues participated
- From 23 kindergartens
- Data:
 - 117 videos
 - 27 voice recordings
 - 29 child observations
 - 79 pedagogue reflections
 - 78 photographs
 - 14 children's drawings





Themes mapped
to children's
rights

Children's development

A gyermek fejlődése

Skills, attitudes, behaviours

Készségek, viselkedési formák, attitűdök

Exploration Exploráció

Rights, self, professional development

Jogok, önkép, szakmai fejlődés

Subjectivity Szubjektivitás

Children, Pedagogues, researchers, creative professionals, parents

Gyermek, pedagógus, kutató, kreatív szakemberek, szülők

Valuing Megbecsülés

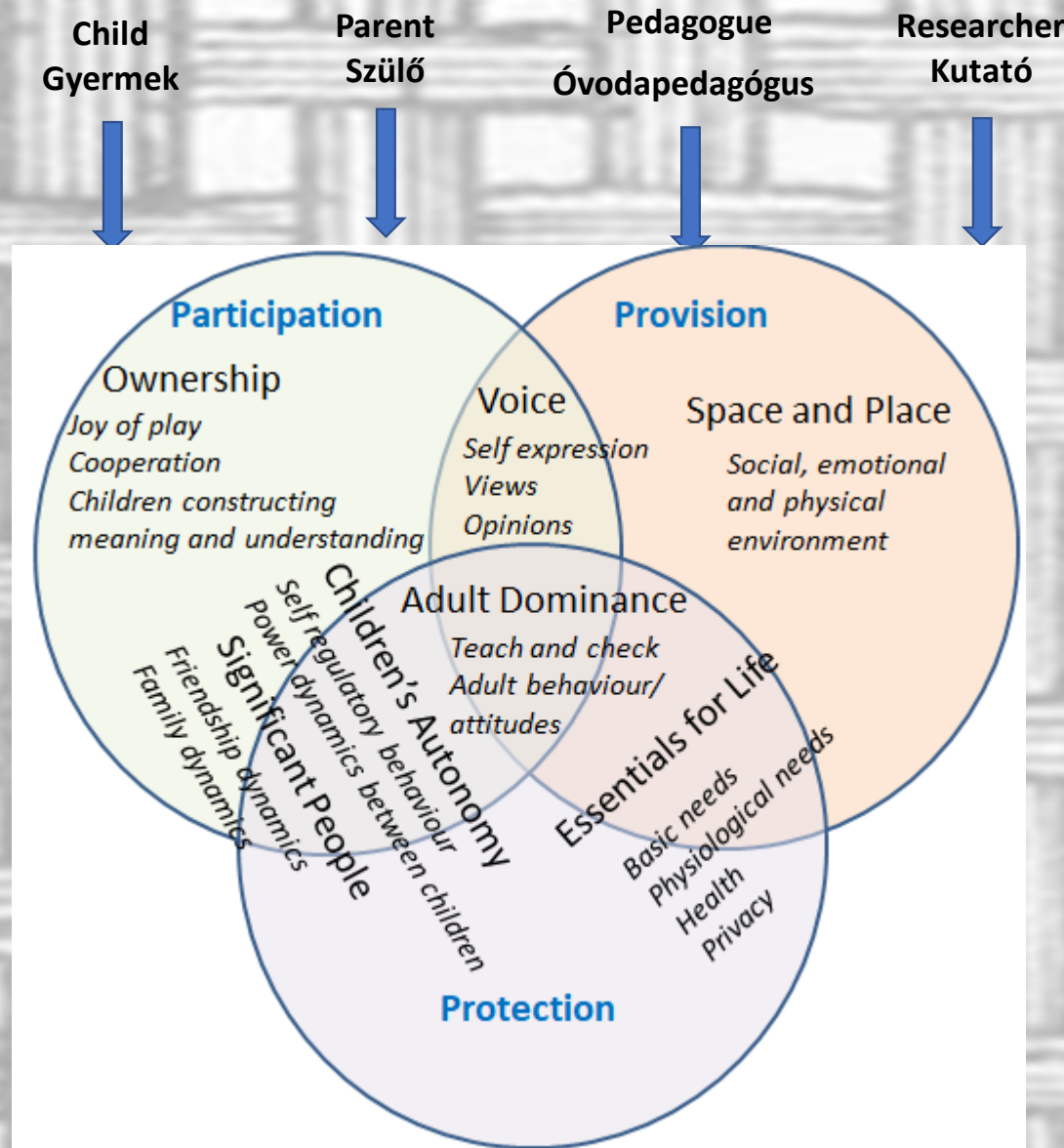
Valuing all children Minden gyermek megbecsülése

Uniqueness Egyediség

Gyermek, pedagógus, kutató, kreatív szakemberek, szülők

Lived experiences Tapasztalat

Multi-sensory experiences Multi-szenzorális tapasztalatok, élmények



Some demonstrative examples – Theme: *Play of freedom*

Children trying to find their own understanding of the world:

- Children asking one another:
“How old is a baby when it is born?”
- Talking about their families:
“My grandma died of Covid. I think we should cancel death.”





Play of freedom cont.

6-year old girls are playing with babies in the home corner. The topic of conversation is the doll's skin colour:

"Your baby looks yellow. Is she poorly?"

"I think she is Chinese."

"I have got a black baby, just like Abraham in Lavender group, he is from abroad."

"No, he can speak Hungarian, he's only got a tan from the sun."

"I am sure that's not true. He is black like your doll, maybe African..."

"But we don't understand African people because they speak African. Abraham is Hungarian, he's just got a tan."

"I still think he can be African, I have seen his dad. His mum is Hungarian."

"Well, it doesn't matter, my doll is still pretty, even if it's black."

(Pedagogue's reflection: she appreciates children's discussion on 'otherness' (language, skin colour) and believes this is a positive situation for children to learn about discrimination.)

Theme: *Important people*

“Here’s something happy: Dad plays with us. Yes, he does. Rarely! Often! He makes some time to play with us. We love Dad.” ... “He is always most important... Dad...it’s important that he could watch TV, and that we leave him to play on his games on the computer. Nothing else!”

One little boy talks a lot about his garden at home, how he thinks it’s fantastic and how he helps to look after it. “I like doing the hoeing with mum, and we ride our bikes with my younger sister, jump around” ... have a nice cocktail and go indoors just to chill out. “Then he invites his peers to his house and says: “It’s important that you eat healthy foods, too.”

Young boy: “My family are my mum, my brother, nan and grandad.”

Pedagogue: “And your Dad?”

Young boy: “He works in Germany. He isn’t in my family. He lives in Germany.”

Pedagogue: “So is he in your family?”

Young boy: “No.”



Theme: *Voice*

"I like everything at kindergarten, except for the building block. But I do miss a real cat in our group."

"I don't like Maths in kindergarten, when we have to play at the tables or when we have to sing or get changed (for outdoor play)."

"Like to hand out toothpaste but don't like brushing my teeth. Because it's too crowded, too many children in there."





Theme: Space and Place

“I cannot sleep but I am afraid of being told off.”

This child is concerned about the hierarchy of beds – where they are placed. Near the toys is ‘good’, but near the pedagogue is ‘bad’. The child is worried about needing to go to the toilet when they are supposed to be sleeping. The child is fearful of having bad dreams, dreams of falling off the bed onto the dirty floor and then having to sleep in the dirt.



Recommendations for policy and practice

POLICY

A supplement to the National Core Programme that 'translates' its key principles in relation to children's rights

PRACTICE

Pre-service:

- Incorporation of children's rights and listening to children's voices into HE curriculum materials for BA level kindergarten pedagogue training.

In-service:

- utilise project participants as 'mentors' (or lead practitioners) to support colleagues in establishing local communities of practice.



Dissemination of findings

- **Puppet Show** – premier in Oct then travelling across Hungary
- 2-day **conference** for all stakeholders – Oct 2022
- **Practitioner papers:** A series of articles in Óvodai Nevelés [Kindergarten Education] for pedagogues on a right-respecting pedagogical approach
- **Conference presentations/Seminars:** Re-Collect/Re-Connect; OVOK; EECERA, CRC @the OU

Outputs:

- **Academic paper:** Canning, N., Teszenyi, E. and Palfi, S. (forthcoming: Oct 2022) Are you listening to me? Understanding children's rights through pedagogic practice in Hungary, *Journal of Childhood, Education and Society*, 3(2)
- Bloomsbury **encyclopaedia entry:** Millei, Zs. and Teszenyi, E. (forthcoming) Post/socialism and early education. In: Taser, M. (ed) *Bloomsbury Encyclopaedia of Social Justice in Education Volume 5: Early Childhood/s and Childhood Studies*.

Highlights for us so far...

- The project has grown from within... and went full circle
- Crossing boundaries: language, culture, research tradition, conceptual understanding
- Developing an extended understanding of the concept of participation as a cultural norm in the (post-socialist) Hungarian context
- Multi-disciplinary nature of the project; link with the arts (puppet theatre)





Further phases of the research

- **PHASE 3** - evaluating the influence of the project in the Hungarian context
- **PHASE 4** - extend the project to other European systems of early education, adapted to local context. To develop a supra-national model of rights respecting pedagogic practice and ways of listening to children's voices, contributing to achieving SDG 4 and EU actions on the 2030 agenda.