

'New Wave' Student Voice and the Renewal of Civic Society

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ABSTRACT The re-emerging field of 'student voice' has the potential to offer an important contribution to education for civic society. An exploration of what 'student voice' aspires to and what it actually does suggests quite different sets of possibilities for educational and civic renewal. A new intellectual framework is offered in the hope that it might contribute further to democratic aspirations and emergent realities.

Introduction

This paper sets out to explore recent developments in a re-emerging field, now often known as 'student voice', which in its apparent desire to encourage young people to articulate their concerns and aspirations about a whole range of matters has the potential to offer an important contribution to education for civic society. I begin by attempting to contextualise what is now a burgeoning range of practical and research activities before then attempting a twofold differentiation of what I take 'student voice' to be about. I look, firstly, at professional understandings and locations of student voice in order to try to get a more fine-grained feel for the kinds of things that currently exemplify its daily work. Secondly, and partly in response to my own disappointments and unfulfilled aspirations, I look at a number of political and ideological frameworks in the hope that they might assist in deepening my understanding of the prospects and possibilities of future work in this field. My last section suggests a new intellectual framework—namely, person centred education—which, I argue, has the potential to offer understanding and guidance for the development of education for civic society and creative human flourishing that is especially and distinctively responsive to the pervasive crisis of the human person we currently face. I end by urging us to reclaim and rearticulate our radical educational heritage if we are to provide the human and intellectual resources we need to achieve our democratic aspirations.

The Contemporary Context of 'New Wave' Student Voice

Urgency

The need to re-articulate our aspirations for the renewal of education for civic society is at once urgent and exhilarating. It is urgent because, as writers like David Marquand remind us, the application of market models to the public realm not only fail to enhance

the cause of democratic human flourishing, it also undermines the inter-personal foundation of our civic and communal practices and aspirations. In so doing it disrupts and distorts the very basis of our well being as citizens and as persons. ‘The intrusion of market measuring rods and a market rhetoric may twist (the distinctive practices of the public domain) out of shape, and corrode the ethics they embody and pass on’ (Marquand, 2003, p. 35)

Education has suffered particularly badly in this respect. Not only, to quote Marquand again, have ‘the cult of private-sector managerialism and the accompanying audit explosion . . . transformed the attitudes and behaviour of its managers’ (2003, p. 125), we remain driven by the raucous ‘rigour’ of a dispiriting, increasingly punitive and discredited form of accountability—‘the suspicious and impatient hectoring and the relentless paper-chasing’ (2003, p. 142)—and the bullying requirements of a subsequently pressured practice, full of ticked targets and prescribed pedagogy, signifying, if not nothing, then too little we feel genuinely worthwhile and too much we abhor. Good teachers achieve despite the current system rather than because of it, whilst significant and increasing numbers of young people find school unfulfilling or reject it altogether. The stentorian tones of middle class ‘voice’ dominate the monologue of the ‘big conversation’ and the dissembling privilege of ‘choice’ renders inaudible the increasingly alien discourse of social justice and basic humanity: ‘money talks; and the louder it talks, the harder it becomes to hear un-monied voices’ (2003, p. 132)

Despite the fact that ‘transformation’ is replacing ‘school improvement’ and ‘networking’, ‘collaboration’ and ‘personalisation’ look set to become the new orthodoxy, there is little acknowledgement that we are only tinkering with a moribund system. Still less is there any recognition that, unless we make the appropriate intellectual effort to think more profoundly and in a more historically informed way about our current dilemmas, we look set to unwittingly usher in a new era that is totalitarian both in its dispositions and its practical consequences. These are matters the populist panacea of ‘personalisation’ is unlikely to either address or redress. Insistent advocacy of ‘voice’ and ‘choice’ does little to demystify the metaphysics of the market or make visible the ‘beneficent’ hand that guides its daily work: alliterative resonance is no substitute for profound thought and intelligent action.

Exhilaration

If the depth and extent of market rationality—‘the chief threat to democracy in present-day Britain’ (Marquand, 2003, p. 4)—make the task of the contributors to this volume all the more urgent, I have no doubt that the richness and resonance of civic rationality and the vibrancy of its counter-narratives offer a source of exhilaration. Interestingly, the discourses of what I have, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, called the ‘new wave’ of ‘student voice’ which provide the central pre-occupation of this article, pose something of a puzzle. Is student voice best understood as part of an essentially neo-liberal project, as part of a resurgent democratic engagement, as part of a Foucauldian furtherance of ‘governmentality’, a mixture of all or some of these, or something quite different that needs to be named more eloquently and more convincingly than other discourses and frameworks currently allow?

I will come to those dilemmas shortly. For the moment it is enough to record at least an initial exhilaration since, perhaps to our surprise, two decades of profoundly damaging policies and practices have also seen the emergence of apparently positive developments in what has come to be known as pupil or ‘student voice’. As much as any development in schools in the last ten years, this ‘new wave’ of student voice activity seems to hold out real hope both for renewal and for the development of pre-figurative democratic practice that

give teachers and students the courage and the confidence to create new practices and proposals for a more just and vibrant society.

Student voice covers a range of activities that encourage reflection, discussion, dialogue and action on matters that primarily concern students, but also, by implication, school staff and the communities they serve. This includes such developments as peer support arrangements (e.g., buddying systems, peer tutoring, peer teaching, circle time), systems that encourage and enable students to articulate their views and see through appropriate changes (e.g., schools councils, students on governing bodies, students on appointment panels for new staff—including deputy heads and head teachers, ‘child-to-child’ initiatives, and students-as-researchers) and a small but growing cluster of activities that encourage various forms of overt student leadership (students as lead-learners and student-led learning walks).

In most cases, particular approaches are supported and/or inspired by external organisations dedicated to developing and promoting those areas of work. It is also increasingly true that there is significant external support from a number of different sources, many of which offer a range of approaches rather than a single focus and some of which seek to provide a coherent strategic orientation plugged in to local, regional and sometimes national networks.

Of the four mentioned below, the most substantially funded and most extensive are those connected to central government. Whilst the recent Department for Education and Skills’ *Working Together: giving children and young people a say* (DfES, 2004) is a one-off intervention, it remains an important, if rather cautious, symbolic statement. Much more significant and much more sophisticated, both in conception and realisation, is the National College for School Leadership’s (NCSL) burgeoning Networked Learning Communities initiative (Networked Learning Communities, 2004) which has encouraged some imaginative and highly innovative forms of student voice work. Coordinated and led by Jane McGregor, it looks set to make a very substantial difference to extending the range and raising quality of student voice work within and between schools. Furthermore, the major government advocacy of ‘personalised learning’ (Leadbeater, 2004b) includes not only the familiar, if rather overdone and too often superficial appeal to work with student learning styles, but also the potentially much more radical students-as-researchers initiative also championed by NCSL.

Secondly, there are externally based frameworks and programmes such as the relatively recent Hay McBer ‘Transforming Learning’ programme (Hay McBer, 2004), the long-running, widely used Keele Survey (Keele University, 2004), and the new Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) framework (Ofsted, 2003) that either require or encourage schools to systematically seek the views of young people, often on matters to do with the quality of teaching and learning.

Thirdly, the student voice movement in England owes a huge debt to the sustained, creative and imaginative work of Jean Rudduck at the University of Cambridge who led the highly successful Economic and Social Research Council’s ‘Teaching and Learning Research Programme’ (TLRP) Phase 1 Network Project ‘Consulting pupils about teaching and learning’. As the title suggests, the emphasis was on understanding how consulting young people in a range of ways, often though not solely within the routines of ordinary curriculum engagement, can help students, teachers and schools become more vibrantly engaged with a richer understanding and practice of teaching and learning. The findings and publications emerging from the six projects involved are making significant contributions both to the development of student voice work in schools and to an appropriately reflexive engagement with underpinning theoretical and ideological issues (see Arnot et al., 2004; Fielding & Bragg, 2003; MacBeath et al., 2003; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004).

Fourthly, there are local and regional centres of support. Most of these are based around universities and include Cambridge University; London University Institute of Education; Manchester Metropolitan University; Nottingham University; and Sussex University. Also important is the fact that a small but growing number of LEAs have committed themselves to supporting this kind of work in a variety of ways. Bedfordshire has long been a leader in the field: Louise Raymond of the Bedfordshire School Improvement Partnership (BSIP) has pioneered imaginative work within and across phases for a number of years. Essex has developed a strong tradition of student voice work, especially in connection with students with special educational needs and, working with the Centre for Educational Innovation team from the University of Sussex, the City of Portsmouth has put student voice work at the heart of their Portsmouth Learning Community five year programme of educational renewal.

Differentiating Student Voice: the professional dimension

At first and even second glance, all seems well. The range of work that is going on is very impressive indeed, there is a release of energy and hope, an eagerness to engage in new forms of development and enquiry, a vibrancy that has for too long been absent from much of teachers' daily work. However, there are a number of key questions it is important to ask at this point. The first set arises from the need for greater clarity, not about the range of student voice activities, but about their nature: what kinds of things are being described as student voice? Is there any way of interrogating practices so that we can form reasonable judgements about the degree to which they are, for example, benign but condescending, cynical and manipulative, supportive and groundbreaking, with regard to the involvement of young people?

Is administering an externally devised questionnaire about the quality of teaching to a particular year group of students which provides useful information to senior leadership significantly different in kind to a multi-method student-led review of an area of the curriculum which is subsequently transformed by student involvement? If we are able to make sensible distinctions, how useful are they in helping us to clarify how far we have travelled along a road that might lead to the kind of civic renewal this special issue is seeking to promote?

A number of writers have suggested frameworks that help us to think about these matters more clearly. Perhaps the best known and the most influential is Roger Hart's 'ladder of participation' (Hart, 1997, also see the useful adaption in Landsown, 1995). Others include the work of Douglas Barnes and his Leeds' colleagues (Barnes et al., 1987), Mary John (John, 1996), Caroline Lodge and Jane Reed (Lodge & Reed, 2003), Harry Shier (Shier, 2001), Pat Thomson and Roger Holdsworth (2003) and Dennis Thiessen (Thiessen, 1997)

My own two-part framework (see Fielding, 2001b, c) is in sympathy with much of this work and arose out of my engagement in the students-as-researchers initiative that I started in 1996 with Louise Raymond, then deputy head at Sharnbrook Upper School, Bedfordshire and now a key figure in BSIP (see above). The first part—*From Data to Dialogue: a four-fold typology of student engagement* (see Figures 1–4, below)—explores the differential, inter-related involvement of young people and staff (usually, but not necessarily, their teachers) in taking forward their work together. The second part—*Evaluating the Conditions for Student Voice* (see Figure 5, below) suggests nine questions designed to interrogate the conditions within which student voice activities may take place. Together they offer a set of distinctions that help us to be clear: (a) about the nature of the work being undertaken; and (b) whether or not it is likely to become the kind of reality we wish to support.

From Data to Dialogue: a four-fold typology of student engagement

Student involvement can mean and is often intended to mean very different things. It can range from one end of a continuum in which student voice is in largely passive mode and only audible through the products of past performance to the other end of the continuum where student voice is the initiating force in an enquiry process which invites teachers' involvement as facilitating and enabling partners in learning. At one end of the continuum we have 'Students as data source', then 'Students as active respondents', then 'Students as co-researchers' and, finally, at the other end, 'Students as researchers'.

Teacher role. Acknowledge and use information about student performance
Student role. Receive a better informed pedagogy
Teacher engagement with students. Dissemination
Classroom e.g. Data about student past performance
Team/Dept e.g. Looking at samples of student work
School e.g. Student attitude surveys, cohort exam and tests scores

Figure 1. Students as data source—characteristic examples

With 'Students as data source' there is a real teacher commitment to pay attention to student voice speaking through the practical realities of work done and targets agreed. There is an acknowledgement that for teaching and learning to improve there is a need to take more explicit account of relevant data about individual students and group or class performance. Students are thus recipients of a better informed pedagogy. Teachers are helped to understand more about students through the effective dissemination of information about their performance or attitudes.

Teacher role. Hear what students say
Student role. Discuss their learning and approaches to teaching
Teacher engagement with students. Discussion
Classroom e.g. Shared lesson objectives / explicit assessment criteria
Team/Dept e.g. Students evaluate a unit of work
School e.g. Traditional school council

Figure 2. Students as active respondents—characteristic examples

With 'Students as active respondents' there is a teacher willingness to move beyond the accumulation of passive data and a desire to hear what students have to say about their own experience in lessons and in school. Students are thus discussants rather than recipients of current approaches to teaching and learning. Dissemination of existing information is supplemented and transcended through the teacher's commitment to make meaning out of that data through active discussion with her students.

Teacher role. Listen in order to learn
Student role. Co-researcher with teacher on agreed issues
Teacher engagement with students. Dialogue (teacher-led)
Classroom e.g. Focus groups conducted by student co-researchers
Team/Dept e.g. Students assist in team/dept action research
School e.g. Transition between primary/secondary school

Figure 3. Students as co-researchers—characteristic examples

'Students as co-researchers' sees an increase in both student and teacher involvement. This is much more of a partnership than the two previous modes and, whilst student and teacher roles are not equal, they are moving more strongly in an egalitarian direction. Students move from being discussants to being co-researchers into matters of agreed significance and importance. Whilst the boundaries of action and exploration are fixed by the teacher, and whilst she identifies (again typically through negotiation) what it is that is to be investigated, explored and better understood, the commitment and agreement of students is essential. This change in relationship is matched by a change in the form and manner of teacher engagement with her students: hearing is supplemented by the more attentive listening. Since there is a much richer and more overt interdependence in the 'Student as co-researcher' mode, discussion is replaced by teacher-led dialogue. As befits dialogue, teacher and students are in a much more exploratory mode. There is now the potential to move out of the arena of 'delivery' and enter spaces that are potentially more open and more creative.

Teacher role. Listen in order to contribute
Student role. Initiator and director of research with teacher support
Teacher engagement with students. Dialogue (student-led)
Classroom e.g. What makes a good lesson?
Team/Dept e.g. Gender issues in technology subjects
School e.g. Evaluation of e.g., PSHE system, radical school council

Figure 4. Students as researchers—characteristic examples

The fourth mode—'Students as researchers'—deepens and extends the egalitarian thrust we noted with 'Students as co-researchers'. Partnership remains the dominant working motif, but here it is the voice of the student that comes to the fore and in a leadership or initiating, not just a responsive role. It is students who identify issues to be researched or investigated; students who undertake the research with the support of staff; students who have responsibility for making sense of the data, writing a report or presenting their findings; and it is students to whom the class teacher, team/department or school community are bound to respond in ways which are respectful, attentive and committed to positive change. Teachers are thus not just committed to appreciative listening in order to learn from students in joint enquiry, but active listening in order to contribute to and support student-led research. Dialogue is at the heart of this mode of working. Distinctively the dialogue is student-led rather than teacher led and, potentially at any rate, the exploratory impetus of 'Students as Co-researchers' is further enhanced by the pivotal place of student perceptions and perspectives in the animation and conduct of the research. It is the very differences that tend to exist between the experiences and hopes of young people and those of adults that offers a source of creativity and vibrant engagement.

Whether we use the typology offered here or one of those cited earlier it is clear that different kinds of student voice development open up very different sets of possibilities for students, for staff, for the school as a learning community and for the schools' capacity to engage with its communities in the process of reciprocal renewal. What is also clear is that student voice activities, however committed they may be, will not of themselves achieve their aspirations unless a series of conditions are met that provide the organisational structures and cultures to make their desired intentions a living reality.

Evaluating the Conditions for Student Voice

The following nine interrogative sites, together with their attendant questions (see figure 5, below), offer one way of trying to ensure that we ask ourselves serious questions about the institutional conditions likely to support the kinds of developments we wish to encourage. They are animated by Linda Alcoff's Foucauldian insistence that it is 'the structure of discursive practice' (Alcoff, 1991, p. 2) that has a key influence of whether or not the voices of young people are taken seriously (see Fielding, 2004a, for further reflections on this point). Too often we either avoid many of these questions or acknowledge them in ways which seldom lead to sustained action. On their own or in combination they probe uncomfortably into the lived realities that enable or preclude the civic engagement we desire.

In earlier work (Fielding, 2001c) I have used this framework to explore new developments and existing practices within the field of student voice. It has proved quite helpful in a number of respects, particularly as a means of grounding and interrogating much of the ambitious rhetoric inevitably associated with new developments in a practical field. What struck me at the time and more forcibly since was how hard it was to practice and sustain more ethically nuanced approaches to student voice informed by professional identities and aspirations that run counter to the entrepreneurial norms that define and exemplify the dominant context of performativity. The more radical, 'transversal' (Fielding, 2001b) forms of students-as-researchers work that a small number of us started in high spirits and great hope in the mid 1990s proved harder than I had thought to develop elsewhere in a sustainable way. Thus, something with seemingly profound consequences for the cultural practices and structural arrangements of a highly successful school amounted in some other schools in other contexts to little more than the dreary sameness of management-inspired questionnaires about matters of little real consequence to the relatively small proportion of students who chose to return them. The brave and adventurous rupturing of boundaries and roles that was students-as-researchers in one school became a rather dull and dutiful student-sanctioned conformism in another. Why?

Differentiating Student Voice: the political dimension

In order to provide more satisfactory answers to questions about the enormous variation in advocacy and practice we need to locate professionally differentiated approaches within a politically differentiated analysis of contemporary student voice work in England.

There are many different frames and analytic resources that can be used to do this. In this inevitably perilous and constrained task I have chosen to identify three standpoints that are likely to attract significant support and offer substantial explanatory potential. I have termed these neo-liberal, emancipatory and post-structuralist.

Neo-liberal Hegemony

Those approaching student voice from a neo-liberal standpoint tend to emphasise a range of different ways in which students can be consulted about their learning in order that teachers will respond, standards rise and attainment increase. Within the neo-liberal story there are three apparently contradictory, but ultimately synergistic narratives. Its still dominant script is one which invites us to move away from the traditional areas of pastoral and wider engagement with young people and focus more insistently on formal learning in classrooms in schools. It is proclamatory, even proud, in its confidence and its insistence that we return again and again to learning. It is no accident, for example, that the title of the recent, highly successful ESRC TLRP Phase 1 Network project on student voice, which

Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is allowed to speak? • <i>To whom</i> are they allowed to speak? • <i>What</i> are they allowed to speak about? • What <i>language</i> is encouraged/allowed?
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who</i> is listening? • <i>Why</i> are they listening? • <i>How</i> are they listening?
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the skills of dialogue <i>encouraged and supported</i> through training or other appropriate means? • Are those skills understood, developed and practised within the <i>context of democratic values and dispositions</i>? • Are those skills themselves <i>transformed</i> by those values and dispositions?
Attitudes and dispositions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do those involved <i>regard each other</i>? • To what degree are the <i>principle of equal value</i> and the <i>dispositions of care</i> felt reciprocally and demonstrated through the reality of daily encounter?
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How often</i> does dialogue and encounter in which student voice is centrally important occur? • Who <i>decides</i>? • How do the systems enshrining the value and necessity of student voice mesh with or <i>relate to other organisational arrangements</i> (particularly those involving adults)?
Organisational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the <i>cultural norms and values</i> of the school proclaim the centrality of student voice within the context of education as a shared responsibility and shared achievement? • Do the <i>practices, traditions and routine daily encounters</i> demonstrate values supportive of student voice?
Spaces and the making of meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where</i> are the public spaces (physical and metaphorical) in which these encounters might take place? • Who <i>controls</i> them? • What <i>values</i> shape their being and their use?
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What <i>action</i> is taken? • Who feels <i>responsible</i>? • <i>What happens</i> if aspirations and good intentions are not realised?
The future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we need <i>new structures</i>? • Do we need <i>new ways of relating to each other</i>?

Figure 5. Evaluating the conditions for student voice

foregrounded a very exciting range of developments in the field mentioned earlier (p. 199), was called 'Consulting pupils about teaching and learning'.

The second script, which is now emerging more strongly than in the recent past, concerns ways in which we are invited to listen to and proactively develop the affective voices and behaviour of young people in what has come to be known as the 'well being' agenda. Here, what seemed at first to be contradictory developments, now turn out to be complementary practices. Circle time, one-to-one tutorials, coaching, mentoring, peer tutoring and buddying schemes are legitimated as the active sites of emotional intelligence and consequently more sustained engagement in what is seen as the core work of the school, i.e., to raise standards of attainment in publicly measurable ways.

The third script concerns the neo-liberal interpretation of citizenship as primarily to do with the consumption of political commodities and artefacts, often through representative structures or processes. Here schools councils are particularly prominent, though again, it is interesting to note that one of the tests of their contemporary credentials concerns the degree to which their agendas extend to matters of teaching and learning, not just the more traditional, largely pastoral concerns.

Emancipatory Critique

Emancipatory critiques of the dominant neo-liberal position tend to argue that the current vogue for student voice is primarily an instrument of school effectiveness driven by adult purposes linked firmly to economic performance and the continued ascendancy of those in positions of power. The double advocacy of 'choice' and 'voice' at the heart of neo-liberal rhetoric is seen as at best disingenuous and at worst dishonest. Promotion of student engagement turns out to be important and prominent for much the same reasons as 'user' engagement is important in other professions; that is to say, they are both essentially disciplinary devices aimed at increased compliance and enhanced productivity. The entry of student voice into the secret garden of the curriculum is neither innocent nor innocuous. In rearticulating the largely predictable list of what makes a good teacher, a good lesson or a good school students become unwitting agents of government control.

'Choice' possesses the double virtue of engaging and motivating those who make the choice and disciplining those whose job it is to provide the services in question whilst its pervasive, insistent and eloquent presence masks the central framework within which choice is expressed and action constrained. Its more radical variants, such as those advocated by Charles Leadbeater (Leadbeater, 2004a, b) under the aegis of the 'personalisation' agenda are highly unlikely to go much beyond 'customisation' of existing options. The now ubiquitous use of terms like 'personalisation' also alert critics to the co-option and incorporation of discourse typical of quite other perspectives and orientations. Thus, as we have noted earlier, 'well being', is robbed of its teleological status and becomes a mere foot soldier in the standards crusade.

Equally unsatisfactory from an emancipatory standpoint is the atomistic individualism typical of neo-liberal thinking, its ironically undifferentiated account of 'voice', its pervasive silence about issues of power, and its highly instrumental view of learning. Thus, within the current valorisation of student voice there is no convincing account of the common good. Nor is there any recognition that not all voices are the same—that some students are more privileged and more able than others to articulate their needs in the dominant discourse (see Silva, 2001; Rubin & Silva, 2003). Nor is there any acknowledgement that the cultural and structural arrangements and spaces within which those voices are heard are themselves shaped and controlled by positional interests (see Fielding, 2004a; McGregor, 2004a, b). Still less is there any awareness that the beatific adornment of 'learning' is entirely

instrumental robes makes advocacy of the primacy of 'well being' a contemporary professional heresy (for excellent critiques of the current hegemony of 'learning' see Grey, 2001; Biesta, 2004).

Post-structuralist Response

Whilst post-structuralist critics of work on student voice are well known (Ellsworth, 1989; Orner, 1992) they are only now beginning to engage with the new wave of student voice advocacy and activity. Among the most eloquent and insightful is by Sara Bragg (Bragg, 2003). She argues not only that the optimism animating early research in this latest phase of student voice development was naively oblivious to power relations (see Soo Hoo, 1993), but also that emancipatory critiques operate with too totalising a view of power (Holdsworth & Thomson, 2002). Writing about arguably the most radical of contemporary student voice developments—students-as-researchers—Bragg suggests that, rather than dismissing it as a more sophisticated form of incorporation, we should appreciate its ambivalence and its positive, if inevitably constrained, potential. Certainly, along with other forms of student voice, students-as-researchers is 'not so much voice as device' (Bragg, 2003, p. 6) guiding what can and cannot be said through students' hybrid self-construction of new identities that allow greater autonomy and independence. Whereas neo-liberal advocacy is silent about the costs that accompany increased agency emancipatory critiques are too strident in their dismissal of the possibility of any significant capacity to challenge that hegemony. Post-structuralist perspectives acknowledge both the gains made and the price paid: developments like students-as-researchers do offer real, not illusory, freedom, but 'at the cost of an intensification of relations of domination in the need to assent with heart not just body, to give an inner commitment not just outer conformity' (Bragg, 2003, p. 12).

Contributions of Student Voice to the Renewal of Civic Society

What I hope is clear from this necessarily brief engagement with a number of key perspectives through which one can read the various narratives of contemporary student voice work is that the possibilities of education for civic society will seem very different depending both on which lens one looks through and what one chooses to look at.

The Neo-liberal Contribution. The strengths of the neo-liberal position lie primarily in its willingness to significantly extend the arenas within which the voices of young people are legitimately expressed and the companion injunction that those who listen take what they say seriously. Student voice forces us to confront the present realities and future aspirations of those for whom the system of formal schooling exists. Insofar as it is able to do that it is more honest and more real in its engagement and more encouraging of those who will later become the custodians of civic society. Through championing the voice of young people as both consumers and customers society becomes more attentive to individual need and thereby richer and more vibrant in its negotiations and decisions. It becomes, in effect, a more responsive society and in so doing it not only enhances its capacity to be creative, but also its capacity to gain and retain the allegiance of young people to social and political processes. Extending the range and depth of student voice thus turns out to be an important response to the contemporary legitimisation crisis, not just of one standpoint or another, but of politics as such.

The persistent and irresolvable difficulty for neo-liberals lies in their atomistic, market-oriented reductionism that, however deft their contemporary sleights of hand, remains

incapable of giving a satisfactory account of the public good or a convincing strategy for its realisation. The discourse of the market and the discourse of the public realm are incommensurable. Arguably one of the most serious challenges faced by contemporary, largely neo-liberal, student voice work concerns the scant attention given to the specifically public nature of its practice and the role of collective or communal voice. There is invariably a lack of serious engagement both with the wider student body on whose behalf various schemes and initiatives take place and with school staff on whose goodwill and understanding so much depends.

The Emancipatory Contribution. Whereas the residual atomism of neo-liberal ontology presents inevitable and enduring problems for anything other than a self-interested, calculative form of civic engagement the solidary orientation of critical theory encourages an approach to student voice that seeks to develop the very areas neo-liberalism distorts or ignores. This is likely to involve particular use of quasi-collective forms and structures like students-as-researchers and student councils and the necessary, companion commitment to reaching the whole student body on whose behalf they do their work. What marks out a typically emancipatory approach is firstly its strong sense of solidary responsibility, e.g., undertaking research or articulating views and suggesting changes on behalf of others, and, secondly, a clear sense of located identity, e.g., the deliberate identification of and loyalty to groups and persons often marginalised within particular communities or wider society. The discourse and working practices of researchers who are, e.g., young refugees (Kirby *et al.*, 2001) or disenfranchised young women (Cruddas, 2001, 2003) are significantly different, both in process and purpose, to students-as-researchers in, e.g., most English secondary schools.

In addition to an insistent concern for matters of social justice there are three other features of emancipatory approaches to student voice which could contribute particularly positively towards the next phase of education for civic society. These are firstly, the specifically public nature of its advocacy, to which I shall return in a moment; secondly, its inclination to involve and engage with communities outside the school, e.g., providing safe and creative spaces for young children to play in an often hostile urban environment; and, thirdly, its impetus towards an international, rather than a parochial, orientation, e.g., engaging with globalisation or the support of young people in a country suffering war or persecution.

Given the resonance of Marquand's defiant rallying cries against the 'decline of the public', the renewal of the public realm must have substantial claims on our time and our attention. One response to Marquand would be to explore more imaginatively and more tenaciously ways in which we can develop a specifically public realm in schools, one which is used by adults and young people as co-enquirers and co-constructors, not just of the instrumental pre-occupations of school improvement, but the educational requirements of civic engagement. For example, current students-as-researchers work tends to underplay and under-explore the later stages of its work. These include making of meaning from the data, agreeing recommendations and suggestions for desirable changes, debating and discussing the validity, desirability, significance and meaning of the report, and taking appropriate action which binds the community together in realising the desired changes. Too often some of these stages are skimmed and others ignored; too often, as one very supportive teacher remarked, there is no space, real or metaphorical for, in this case staff, to either register support for the work of students-as-researchers or register disagreement with the findings of their research. There was, in effect, no public space in which young people and adults could, as mutual partners in the development of their school as a learning community, discuss matters of common intention and shared significance. Invitations to students to present work or discuss issues at staff meetings are an important first step and

a number of schools do do this. But this does not address the fundamental point that we need to create public spaces that are jointly and freely egalitarian and within which any member of the school, whatever their age, status, gender or cultural identity feels able to raise matters of significance to themselves and the community to which they belong.

The Post-structuralist Contribution. Post-structuralists would support much of the drift of the emancipatory argument but remind us, firstly, of the multiple, shifting nature of identities; secondly, of the dangers of an undifferentiated, totalising notion of the public; and, thirdly, of spaces that are likely to open up within the neo-liberal project for different stories to be told and new opportunities to be explored.

In addressing the habitual singularity of student 'voice' typical of neo-liberalism and the dangers of undifferentiated collectivity endemic in critical theory the post-structuralist contribution to the renewal of civic society through student voice foregrounds the importance of the local, the transitory and the evanescent, even opportunistic forms of student voice. These will often be linked to the marginalised and under-represented groups in school or society (see Cruddas, 2001, 2003).

A school inspired by a post-structuralist reading of student voice would encourage multiple groupings and sites for student engagement, both within lessons and formal arenas for learning and in non-formal and community based contexts. It would be keen to move beyond dominant groups of school activity like school councils and students-as-researchers and encourage locally negotiated, locally energised forms of engagement, e.g., between groups of students and their teacher(s) about matters of pedagogy or inter-personal welfare in the classroom; temporary alliances clustering round particular issues, e.g., addressing personal/psychological safety in particular parts of the school; and groups animated by more enduring matters of identity and social justice, e.g., gay adolescent males struggling against the homophobic norms of their peers.

Finally, a post-structuralist approach to student voice would, like its emancipatory counterpart, also pay attention, not just to the sites and topics of student concerns, but to the manner in which members of the groups relate to each other, to the way the sensitivities, values and commitments that brought them together require them to work differently, sensitively and openly, not just efficiently and effectively.

Person-Centred Approaches to Student Voice: on the practical necessity of philosophy

Whilst each of the three perspectives outlined above have important things to contribute to education for civic renewal none of the arguments or advocacy, even from the more promising perspectives and combinations, goes to the heart of either the crisis we are facing or the opportunities we must open up if we are to retain and extend our humanity together. Certainly we face a crisis of civic renewal, but that crisis is part of a much deeper malaise we need to name much more clearly. Our crisis is a crisis of the human person (Fielding, 2004b) [1], not just of our capacity to engage with each other in recreating and extending the essential structures, activities and dispositions of public life which, as David Marquand so eloquently reminds us, hold the key to our modern democratic heritage and the possibility of its continued flourishing.

Certainly, those writing from within the emancipatory and post-structuralist traditions have compelling things to say that illuminate aspects of the crisis, but none names its most pernicious dangers with sufficient clarity or, in line with David Halpin's advocacy (Halpin, 2003), paints a vibrant picture of intriguing and energising alternatives.

At the heart of our current crisis, which is, I repeat, a crisis of the human person, lie unresolved philosophical problems about how we might provide an adequate account of the

self. How are we to understand our development as persons in ways which build on the insights of earlier epochs, but move us on from the inadequacies of each? For John Macmurray, on whose work my own model of personal and organisational flourishing rests, this is best understood in three ways. Firstly, we need to recognise that human beings are deeply situated, communal beings whose personhood is steeped in mutuality. For Macmurray our personhood:

. . . is constituted by, and does not merely imply, personal relationships between persons. Personality is mutual in its very being. The self is one term in the relation between two selves. It cannot be prior to that relation and, equally, of course, the relation cannot be prior to it. 'I' exists only as a member of the 'you and I'. The self only exists in the communion of selves. (Macmurray, 1933, p. 137)

Or, as he put it 30 years later in *Persons in Relation*:

We need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us upon the others is the central and crucial fact of personal existence. . . . Here is the basic fact of our human condition. (Macmurray, 1961, p. 211)

It is not just that:

. . . human personality is constituted by personal relations. It is only through our personal relations that we are human all. . . . The human individual—out of relation to all other human individuals—is a myth. (Macmurray, 1945, p. 8)

It is also that the self is dynamic, shifting, constantly changing, constantly the expression of our lived and living relation with others:

Our 'personality' is not something that belongs to us as individuals; it is not in us but between us. Perhaps it is even true that we are different persons in different personal relationships. (Macmurray, 1945, p. 8, underlining in original)

Secondly, he argued that there are two fundamentally different kinds of relation we have as persons. Thirdly, and most originally and most importantly, he suggested we need to develop a more satisfactory understanding of the proper relation between the two.

The Philosophical Basis of Person Centred Education

The two different modes of encounter with other persons that define our being in the world are what Macmurray calls 'functional' relations and 'personal' relations. 'Functional' or instrumental relations are typical of those encounters that help us to get things done in order to achieve our purposes: indeed, functional relations are defined by those purposes. When I buy a train ticket to travel to the seaside my relationship with the person that sells me the ticket has solely to do with an exchange of money and a subsequent right to travel from A to B on the train. We do not reveal our deeper fears and aspirations to each other. By contrast, 'personal' relations exist in order to help us be and become ourselves in and through our relations with others and part of that becoming involves our mutual preparedness to be open and honest with each other about all aspects of our being. In these kinds of relationships, as, for example, in friendship, we do, of course, do things together. However, these joint activities or encounters do not define the relationship; they are expressive of it. Going by

train to the seaside is not the purpose of our friendship; the day out is an expression of our care for and delight in each other.

For Macmurray, the interdependence of the functional and the personal is both inevitable and desirable. The functional provides the concrete, instrumental means by which the personal expresses itself. If I care for you that care achieves practical expression as much through the rudimentary provision of daily necessities as it does through special acts of kindness. Community, another frequently cited example of a personal rather than a functional mode of human relation, expresses itself, or in Macmurray's words, 'gets hands and feet', through the practical arrangements we enter into to express our shared humanity and the creativity of our differences.

Just as the personal needs the functional to realise itself in action, so too the functional needs some element of the personal to achieve its purposes. The key point here lies in Macmurray's further suggestions, not just of the interdependence of the functional and the personal, but the particular nature of that interdependence. For him, whilst the personal is through the functional—concern, care, delight become real in action through practical expression—crucially *the functional is for the sake of the personal*. Thus, economic activity (the functional) is only legitimate insofar as it helps us to lead more fulfilled lives (the personal); politics and the fight for social justice (the functional) are the servants of communal flourishing (the personal). Within systems of compulsory public education, schooling (the functional) is for the sake of education (the personal); within schools themselves, administrative, management and other organisational arrangements (the functional) are for the sake of a vibrant and creative community (the personal).

In my own work I have begun to augment and extend Macmurray's line of thinking and argue that not only is the functional for the sake of the personal, and the personal achieved through the functional, but the influence of the personal on the functional is transformative of it: *the functional should be expressive of the personal*. Ends and means must be inextricably linked; the means should themselves be transformed by the ends by which they are inspired and towards which they are aiming. The functional ways in which we work together in schools to achieve personal, communal and educational ends should be transformed by the moral and interpersonal character of what we are trying to do.

The crisis we currently face has its roots in the fact that our dominant practical and intellectual frameworks reverse the very relation I am advocating. In what I term the 'high performance' model of schooling the personal is used for the sake of the functional: students are included or excluded, valued or not, primarily on the basis of whether they contribute to organisational performance of the school. The pressure they and their teachers are put under to raise standards and improve performance marginalises the very educational aspirations that gives schooling its justification and its purpose. Student complaints that schools do not care about them as persons, but only about them as bearers of results and measurable outcomes are now ubiquitous. The same is true of teachers. The same is also true of 'new wave' student voice developments on which we pin small but important hopes for the renewal of education for civic society.

My fourfold typology 'The communal/instrumental orientation of organisations' (see Figures 6 and 7, below) articulates 'impersonal', 'affective', 'high performance' and 'person-centred' modes of being and working together on the basis of different orientations towards the functional/personal distinctions sketched earlier [2].

In schools as 'impersonal' organisations the functional marginalises the personal. In the 'affective' orientation this relation is reversed with the personal marginalising the functional. In the 'high performance' learning organisation the personal is used for the sake of the functional, whilst in the 'person-centred' learning community the functional is used for the sake of the personal.

Schools as <i>impersonal</i> organisations	Schools as <i>affective</i> communities	Schools as <i>high performance</i> learning organisations	Schools as <i>person-centred</i> learning communities
The functional marginalises the personal	The personal marginalises the functional	The personal is expressive of/used for the sake of the functional	The functional is expressive of/used for the sake of the personal
<i>Organisational type</i> : mechanistic organisation	<i>Organisational type</i> : affective community	<i>Organisational type</i> : learning organisation	<i>Organisational type</i> : learning community
<i>Characteristic mode</i> : efficient	<i>Characteristic mode</i> : restorative	<i>Characteristic mode</i> : effective	<i>Characteristic mode</i> : morally and instrumentally successful

Figure 6. The communal/instrumental orientation of organisations

Within the context of this article the last two orientations—the high performance and the person-centred—are particularly pertinent and the table below (see figure 7, p. 212) suggests typical readings of student voice activity illustrative of their different standpoints.

Student voice operating within the ‘high performance’ mode is largely an instrumental undertaking orientated towards increased measurable organisational performance. In its most extreme form it is about the use of student voice for particular kinds of adult purposes. It is often technologically and emotionally sophisticated, seemingly interested in young peoples’ points of view and attentive to suggestions that may enhance the school’s effectiveness and reputation. It is, however, ultimately totalitarian and often dissembling in its dispositions and its operation: student voice only has significance and is only legitimate insofar as it enhances organisational ends.

Student Voice, Person Centred Education and Civic Renewal

In contrast to high performance approaches, student voice operating in ‘person centred’ mode is explicitly and engagingly mutual in its orientation towards widely conceived educational ends that will often include measurable results, but are not constituted or constrained by them. It is about students and teachers working and learning together in partnership, rather than one party using the other for often covert ends. Its processes and procedures are emergent, rather than fixed, and shaped by the dialogic values that underpin its aspirations and dispositions.

Despite its limitations (see Burbules, 2000; Lefstein, 2004) the dialogic motif provides the most promising inspiration and practical grounding for person centred approaches to student voice and civic renewal. As Morwenna Griffiths’ (Griffiths, 2003, 2004) and Perpetua Kirby’s (Kirby et al., 2002; Marchant & Kirby, 2004) recent work suggests we have to develop spaces and practices within and between our organisations that nurture dialogue, not as exotic or special features of otherwise quite different institutions, but as integral practices of human learning and daily encounter. We need to create public and

Impersonal organisation	Affective community	High performance learning organisation	Person centred learning community
<i>The functional marginalises the personal</i>	<i>The personal marginalises the functional</i>	<i>The personal is expressive of/used for the sake of the functional</i>	<i>The functional is expressive of/used for the sake of the personal</i>
<i>SV: how and why?</i> Restricted formal consultation making current arrangements more efficient	<i>SV: how and why?</i> Ambient listening fostering closer understanding of those involved	<i>SV: how and why?</i> Wide ranging formal and informal consultation making current arrangements more effective	<i>SV: how and why?</i> Wide ranging formal and informal mutual engagement to enhance the development of wise persons
<i>Power/hierarchy:</i> hierarchy explicit amongst students and staff	<i>Power/hierarchy:</i> tacit roles and covert power relations	<i>Power/hierarchy:</i> adult use of student perspectives for institutional purposes	<i>Power/hierarchy:</i> joint work partnerships, often exploratory, seldom predictable
<i>Relationships:</i> distance and formal respect	<i>Relationships:</i> framed closeness of matriarchy/patriarchy	<i>Relationships:</i> instrumental use of trust and relationships	<i>Relationships:</i> mutual trust, care and respect
<i>Ethos:</i> formal ethos	<i>Ethos:</i> informal ethos and engagement	<i>Ethos:</i> apparently open ethos framed by need to see measurable results	<i>Ethos:</i> enabling ethos encouraging diversity and inclusiveness amongst all learners
<i>Arrangements for listening:</i> emphasis on formal procedures	<i>Arrangements for listening:</i> ambient listening, largely dispensing with formal procedures	<i>Arrangements for listening:</i> multiple managed opportunities for staff and students to listen to young people's views of what staff are interested in	<i>Arrangements for listening:</i> reciprocal listening resulting in emergent foci and wide-ranging agendas
<i>Action:</i> tight teacher control of action	<i>Action:</i> little action with unlikely cumulative effect	<i>Action:</i> action supported within arena of institutional priorities	<i>Action:</i> shared responsibility for (often joint) action on mutually agreed foci
<i>Typical SV activity:</i> student council decides on date and time of a key social event	<i>Typical SV activity:</i> informal discussion over lunchtime about forthcoming school trip	<i>Typical SV activity:</i> students-as-researchers explore, say, disaffection of Y8 boys	<i>Typical SV activity:</i> students and teachers develop more exploratory forms of pedagogy together

Figure 7. Student voice and the communal/instrumental orientation of organisations

private spaces, both physical and metaphorical, where dialogue not just discussion, can take place in ways which are emergent and unanticipated, not just purposefully and properly planned. We need to create shared practices where we can be attentive and open with one another in ways which encourage our mutual responsibility for the quality of our lives together. It is not about displacing the supra-personal virtues of the public realm with the personal intimacy of the private realm. It is about the conjunction of both, but in a way which makes the former subservient to the latter. It is about ensuring justice is informed by and committed to our care for each other as persons, not just as citizens (Noddings, 1999). It is about acknowledging the importance of roles and yet also understanding what roles are for. It is about ensuring student voices and teacher voices are also the voices of persons in relation to one another in the quest for a deeper and more fulfilling humanity.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to student voice work, ‘new wave’ or otherwise, lies in the often unstated double assumption of creative difference and transformative potential. The first of these assumptions—that if we create the right conditions in which young people and adults engage with each other attentively, respectfully and joyfully then the distinctive standpoints of each perspective will be the source of creative development rather than unproductive conflict—has some evidence to substantiate it (see Fielding & Bragg, 2003). The more radical claim that those creative differences can in turn lead to a quite different order of things, to a transformation in a real rather than the familiar rhetorical sense, is much harder to demonstrate. Thus, as Charles Leadbeater (Leadbeater, 2004b) and others rightly point out, asking young people what kind of school they would like presumes the continued existence of schools as viable and desirable social and educational institutions. Young people are as much the product of social, personal and economic relations and presumptions as the rest of us. What evidence is there that teachers and students engaging with each other in particular ways stand even the remote possibility of a fundamental leap of both imagination and practice that will help us to see and make the world differently to how it currently appears?

There is some evidence, but it is occasional, unusual and sometimes, perhaps inevitably, almost tautologically, idiosyncratic. That evidence comes from gifted, courageous teachers and students, who, to echo Stephen’s Spender’s words, ‘are truly great. Who from the womb remember the soul’s history . . . who in their lives fight for life, who wear at their hearts the fire’s centre’. Those teachers and students are more likely to flourish, more likely to create what I have elsewhere called a ‘radical collegiality’ (Fielding, 1999) if they work in schools that offer quite different models and aspirations for joint learning than those we currently presume [3]. If they and what they believe in are to survive their stories must, in my view, be woven into the largely forgotten counter-narratives of our radical heritage that current arrangements, both for compulsory schooling and the preparation of teachers, have virtually obliterated from our memories [4]. As Milan Kundera reminds us ‘the struggle of man (sic) against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting’. If the ‘new wave’ of student voice is to be more than a fashionable event or the servant of forces that seek quite other realities it must take seriously its own heritage and its responsibilities for those who will struggle for social justice and human fulfilment when the wave has crested and it is no longer new.

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Notes

- [1] I have begun to explore ways of naming and responding to this crisis in a number of publications and recent papers that draw heavily on the work of the Scottish philosopher, John Macmurray. Here I can only touch on the key elements of the emerging argument. For a recent more extended, philosophical treatment of these matters see Fielding (2004b).
- [2] I have been developing this typology over a number of years. See Fielding (2000a, b, 2001a, d). Here I offer a necessarily short, indicative account.
- [3] See, for example, the work of the Coalition of Essential Schools in the USA and the work of Human Scale Education in the UK. See also the work on Person Centred Education at the University of Sussex Centre for Educational Innovation.
- [4] The legacy of schools like Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes and Countesthorpe Community College, Leicestershire has continued through the courageous work of many teachers who have remained true to person-centred values and commitments despite mockery, marginalisation and 'the discourse of derision' in the last twenty years. See in particular the work of people like Mike Davies (head teacher at Bishop Park College, Clacton, Essex) and Gill Mullis (Head of English at Hastingsbury Upper School, Bedford) who 'wear at their hearts the fire's centre'. See also the work of people like Alison Peacock (head teacher at The Wroxham School, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire) for exemplification of similar commitments in primary schools. Of course, this list could be much longer. I should be pleased to hear from anyone wishing to develop a counter-narrative of the kind I am advocating.

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