Exploring Three Roles of Student Voice in Educational Research

Nanami Kageyama, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan

xxx

Abstract: Over the past three decades, the field of student voice in education has expanded theoretically and practically. Simultaneously, the involvement of student voice has become more complex philosophically and methodologically. The role of students in educational research and practice has shifted from a passive position, such as a data source, to being more inclusive as partners, knowledge creators, and leaders. This power shift has a significant impact on understanding the experiences of young people. However, even if students participate in decision-making, transforming education toward school justice and democracy is not necessarily realized due to the dominant discourse or a risk for both students and teachers. This paper aims to advance the concept of "student voice," focusing on its role and contributions to transforming education. It offers an analysis of seminal research and identifies three key variations in student voice's role: (i) student voice as feedback, (ii) student voice as design and decision-making, and (iii) student voice as expressing identity. This paper discusses the issue related to each role of student voice and summarizes the transformative educational contributions of each variation. Within this context, the contributions of student voice as expressing identity for transforming education is emphasized. This is particularly relevant in realizing democracy as living and being with others in the world.

Keywords: student voice, transforming education, identity

Introduction

Through document analysis, this paper discusses three variations of student voice in terms of the various roles and contribution to transforming education. Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) recognize the diversification of student voice practices and the commitment to the principles of social justice, democracy, active citizenry, and children's rights. Several scholars identify multiple driving forces behind this development – children's rights, school improvement, active citizenship, student ownership through engagement, student empowerment, school governance, and democratic education (Godfrey, 2011; Gonzalez, Hernandez-Saca, & Artiles, 2017; Thomson & Gunter, 2007; Wisby, 2011). Additionally, some researchers have recognized that student voice activities have significant possibilities for transforming education (Bourke & Loveridge, 2018a; Fielding, 2001; Pearce & Wood, 2019). Over twenty years ago for example, Fielding (2001) noted the potential of student voice to transcend the current reality and create a new one. He presented two opposing scenarios that remain relevant today. The first is the student voice in the school as a performance-based system. The second is the student voice in the practices involving the development of a new community. In the second context, teachers and students are not constrained by government or market-determined agendas; they go beyond what is currently required and create an entirely different reality. Fielding (2001) endorsed the second scenario, calling it a "prefigurative practice" (p. 107) and noted the potential of student voice in creating new education. Recent studies have reconsidered learning in schools through student voices. Bourke and Loveridge (2018b) identified the point of learning from students' perspectives, revealing a dichotomy between the intent of the then New Zealand National Standards agenda,

and their implementation for young learners. Additionally, Pearce and Wood (2019) asserted that if student voice offers an escape from performative culture and a challenge to existing structures of domination, non-performative goals can help students empower themselves and recover some of the teachers' vocational and professional beliefs and values. Non-performative goals refer to involvement in authentic and democratic student participation. These discussions encourage adults to rethink what students learn or what learning is for them.

Over the past three decades, the presence of student voice in educational research has undoubtedly proliferated, with practical research and conceptual discussions evolving reciprocally. In conceptual discussions, the term 'student voice' has been explored and defined in multiple ways (Hadfield & Haw, 2001; Holdsworth, 2018; Holquist, Mitra, Conner, & Wright, 2023; Jones & Hall, 2022; Thomson, 2011). As Bourke and Loveridge (2018a) noted, the involvement of student voice has increasingly become more complex philosophically and methodologically, following this development (also see, Cook-Sather, 2018). With student voice research and practices becoming more complex, it is useful to summarize the concept of what is meant by student voice in educational research.

This overview aims to contribute to advancing the concept of student voice by addressing the role of student voice and their contributions to transforming education. In light of the features of this research area, that is, practical educational research and conceptual discussions, it conceptually examines past practices and contributes to future research. A discussion of the concept of student voice is introduced, followed by

an analysis of the three key roles of student voice that characterize research and practices in educational settings. Finally, these different contributions of student voice are explored with regards transforming education.

Exploring the Concept of Student Voice

Discussions around the concept of student voice needs to begin with the term and associated terms such as the "authoritative voice," the "critical voice," the "therapeutic voice" (Hadfield & Haw, 2001), and the "consumer voice" (Bragg, 2010). More recent discussions have aimed to redefine student voice (Holquist et al., 2023; Jones & Hall, 2022). For example, Jones and Hall (2022) redefined student voice as an integral part of everyday school life and an essential component of teaching professionals' critically reflective practices. They used the lens of critical pragmatism, which led to a more contextualized application. They noted that accountability, traditional hierarchical structures, and the forces of neo-liberalism would be barriers to student voice integrated into everyday life. While recognizing that the student voice within the school improvement agenda risks being tokenistic and merely an accountability measure, they distinguished their definition of student voice from it. In their discussion, student voice practices involved a greater sense of partnership and a two-way dialogue (Jones & Hall, 2022), thus challenging the existing problem of student voice activities in schools. Furthermore, Holquist, Mitra, Conner, and Wright (2023) explore student voice as a process of distributed leadership within schools. They presented a framework outlining the core components of student voice and its elements – Structures (with elements including setting, focus, and intent) and Relationships (comprising access,

representative, roles, and responsiveness). In particular, they asserted that 'roles' and 'responsiveness' were crucial for understanding shared leadership practices (Holquist et al., 2023). They recognized roles as "the level of power and initiative that students have" (p. 728), and responsiveness as "the extent to which a student voice practice contributes to change" (p. 731). Their analyses reflect the prevalent theme in the student voice research and practices – power dynamics.

The shift in teacher-student power dynamics – the issue of how to perceive and include students – has become an important framework in both practices and research, and it is one of the core debates in the field of student voice. Students are positioned in school educational activities away from being perceived as passive sources of data, to becoming active participants, such as researchers, designers, and leaders (Fielding, 1999, 2004; Lee & Zimmerman, 1999; Mitra, 2006; Raymond, 2001).

Correspondingly, this expansion of the students' position has led to the expansion of the term of student voice. Holdsworth (2018) noted that 'student voice' was used interchangeably with 'student agency' and 'student participation' and examined the connections between each word and its intention (also see, Holdsworth, 2017a, 2017b). Holdsworth (2017a) deemed that these terms connected each other and stated that "to concentrate on just one of these terms can lead to misunderstanding and restriction of what we do" (p. 21). Based on this premise, however, Holdsworth (2017a) argued that student participation was needed to explore, challenge, co-construct, and transform education.

Holdsworth's approach to examining the term of student voice helps the understanding of its expanding nature. He delved into the meaning of student voice in more detail and found that student participation, in which students become partners, was needed to transform education. This has significant implications for student voice in transforming education.

The Need to Move Beyond the Perspective of 'The Role of Students

Some researchers have clarified the difficulties of changing practices and addressing student voice, even when students are participating. Thomson and Gunter (2006) highlighted, "student voice is neither neutral nor 'authentic' but is produced by/with dominant discourses" (p. 852). The dominant discourse in the current situation recognizes the culture of performance (Kehoe, 2015). Kehoe (2015) revealed the difficulty for many students to become agents in transforming their own schools. This is because students internalize performance culture, and becoming a change agent is interpreted as a potential risk to their belonging and status (Kehoe, 2015). Additionally, Nelson (2018) demonstrated students' ambivalent responses to being involved as decision-making partners. While one student expressed gratitude and amazement at teachers' respect for students' decision-making capability, another narrated the importance of teachers setting the learning direction. Nelson (2018) pointed out that these ambivalent responses occurred in contexts where "neo-liberal discourses are entrenched" (p. 212). These three articles demonstrate the discomfort or ambivalence in reactions and the subconsciously internalized responses of 'students' in student voice practices.

xxx

Additionally, as Nelson (2018) suggested, the negotiations between teachers and students within the circulating accountability discourse could be a risk for 'teachers' as well. Mitra and McCormick (2017) examined the ethical dilemmas a teacher faces when discussing controversial topics with students in the context of activism. Even schools committed to democratic principles may, at times, tend to avoid being labeled as 'radical' and 'trouble makers.' Consequently, the teacher experienced dilemmas between fostering student activism and adhering to school policies and culture (Mitra & McCormick, 2017).

Thus, even if the students participate in decision-making as partners with adults, transforming education toward school justice and democracy is not necessarily realized. This seems especially true today, when an accountability and performance culture has become globally pervasive in education, and both teachers and students live within the discourse. Hence, to open up new educational perspectives through student voice practices, it is imperative to examine student voice not only from the perspective of 'the role of students' but also from alternative viewpoints.

This paper addresses this relevant question, focusing on the variations in the roles of student voice, and discusses the relationship between these roles and their contributions to transforming education. This paper highlights that each variation in the roles of student voice has a distinct impact on education.

The three variations of student voice as identified through a literature review are based on studies conducted in primary, secondary, and high schools. It included books with the term 'student voice' in their titles or books and newsletter that discussed

practical and conceptual terms (Bourke & Loveridge, 2018a; Czerniawski & Kidd, 2011; Holdsworth, 1979–2021; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015a; Rudduck, Chaplain, & Wallace, 1996; Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007). These books and newsletter present discussions across various contexts and purposes, complemented by a literature review of journal articles. Some articles detail the practices described in the books, while others introduce new perspectives and practices in different contexts. Analyzing these sources will help examine the contributions that each variation specifically makes to transforming education. The three key variations in student voice's role: (i) student voice as feedback, (ii) student voice as design and decision-making, and (iii) student voice as expressing identity are presented in the next sections.

Student Voice as Feedback

The first variation in student voice's roles – student voice as feedback – implies that students provide feedback on their experiences to teachers and researchers and speak out about their school or curriculum. Several studies have been conducted in this regard (Berryman & Eley, 2018; Carnell, 2005; Flynn, 2018; Kane & Maw, 2005; Mullis, 2011; Robinson, Down, & Smyth, 2018; Thomson & Gunter, 2006). Practically, consultation begins as a teacher's initiative, however, the balance of power between teachers and students changes as they learn to trust each other in many schools (Rudduck & MacIntyre, 2007). More recently, Cook-Sather (2018) pointed out an inextricability between the question of rights and that of power. While the research efforts tackled the power imbalance in working with primary and secondary students, drawing on Biddle and Mitra (2015), she emphasized that adults still had doubts about

the readiness of the youth to take on the role of partners at the middle-grade level. This section will describe a specific example of student voice as feedback and address the issue of power imbalance.

Describing An Example of Student Voice as Feedback

Jean Rudduck, a pioneer of the student voice movement in the UK, linked student voice to school improvement. Rudduck (2001) emphasized the importance of adults – teachers, staff, and researchers – considering students' insights on learning as vital to shaping the learning situation. This is because students' voices and perceptions embody their learning experiences and include information that schools and teachers need; students are observant or analytic, and their voices are constructive (Rudduck, 2001). Listening to what students say is an act of professional re-creation for teachers (Rudduck, 2001, 2002). Additionally, Rudduck was concerned about the differences in students' experiences inside and outside school. Outside school, young people face more complex realizations and situations, carry tougher responsibilities, and balance multiple roles compared with their experiences inside school. Hence, adults should recognize students' social mutuality by giving them responsibilities and opportunities to share in decision-making in school (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). This approach implies that Rudduck advocated for power-sharing in schools. However, in reality, while teachers routinely question students to promote an understanding of learning and thinking, important questions not frequently asked in the classroom are related to the learning process, such as what is the best way to learn, what helps you (students) learn, and are you (students) learning better through a particular style of instruction (Flutter &

Rudduck, 2004). Rudduck and her colleagues examined school improvement initiatives that were not aimed at enhancing test scores, rather at reviewing organizational structures and relationships with teachers. They referred to this as "the conditions of learning" (Rudduck et al., 1996, p. 173; Rudduck, Demetriou, Pedder, & the Network Project Team, 2003, p.275).

Rudduck sought to improve the students' learning conditions and demonstrate the transformative potential of teachers through students' voices and perceptions. In this variation, students' voices are respected in terms of the framework of the school or curriculum and contribute to improving school conditions, system, and curriculum. Here, these young people are not merely sources of data or information. Galloway, Pope, and Osberg (2007) interviewed students about their experiences of stress and anxiety in school, finding that most participants felt that their stories and perspectives were valued. Thus, students recognized their comments as valuable, positioning them as more than passive data sources or informants.

The Issue of Power Imbalance: Considering the Dialogic Nature

As identified earlier, teacher-student power dynamics are a central debate in student voice research. However, they represent the issue of power imbalance between adult-child. This means student voice as feedback can, at times, result in superficial changes or become a tokenistic activity, and in such cases, a change in the power structure never occurs. Booker and MacDonald (1999) explored the evaluative practices after learning in Physical Education, where students were interviewed using pre-frame questions. Although this practice provided an opportunity for student opinions, it

revealed issues, such as a restriction of students' voices due to the interview protocol, power issues and student choice, and the homogenization of student voices by adults. The study concluded that student voices were treated as an end in themselves and did not reach a depth to contribute to the construction of the syllabus. Booker and MacDonald (1999) noted that "although student voices have the potential to make a unique contribution to curriculum-making, the question of how to position those voices to ensure that they are heard remains unclear" (p. 93).

Smith (2007) suggested the importance of dialogical decision-making in school reform through student voice. Dialogic nature could be a key to examining power imbalance, and the need for dialogic nature remains in current discussions. Bourke and Loveridge (2018c) noted that teachers interpreted student voices through government policies and their own or their school's pedagogical lenses. Influenced by their school's vision, curriculum, and National Standards at the time of their study, teachers brought the importance of learning back "into the school gates" (Bourke & Loveridge, 2018c, p. 175), even when students offered broader perspectives on the importance of learning beyond those gates. Some teachers mentioned that teachers' active listening to students had the potential to open dialogue with the learners. As an implication, they suggested that "further research working with students and teachers *together* could create new understanding about learning, assessment, young people's value, and translating it into classroom" (p. 175). Their study suggested positioning student voice in a dialogue between adults and young people within a partnering context. Similarly, Lundy (2018) discussed the importance of feedback from teachers to students and how

a teacher's responses to students could open up a space for further dialogue. By doing so, students could feel their opinions being taken seriously (Lundy, 2018).

A significant implication of these studies is the importance of positioning student voice as co-constructive in the process, rather than as a component of an evaluation of a programme or initiative or for gathering feedback. Co-construction requires a dialogic nature in a partnering relationship, which necessitates sharing power between the adult and child. Rudduck explored viewing students as co-inquirers, rather than as evaluators, which entailed trusting student voice as important implications and sharing power between teachers and students. Although this perspective may not be immediately apparent in Rudduck et al.'s (1996) study, it has significantly contributed to the development of discussions and practices in the field of student voice. Some studies transition from students as active respondents to co-inquirers, regardless of whether it was intended (Chopra, 2016; Kane & Maw, 2005; Morgan, 2011; Thomson & Gunter, 2006). Another variation in the role of student voice appears when students become co-inquirers or (co-)researchers.

Student Voice as Design and Decision-Making

Student voice as design and decision-making means that students have a say and participate in deciding what affects them. As Holdsworth (1999) identified, "student participation within schools must link curriculum and governance approaches" (p. 7), hence, student voice as design and decision-making appears in both curriculum and school governance.

Design and Decision-Making in Curriculum

Morgan (2011) demonstrated the potential for higher-quality learning experiences in the classroom through lesson co-planning via partnerships between trainee teachers and students. Initially, students observed the practices and considered six points – role modeling, lesson planning, assessment, classroom management, behavior management, and resources. In the second year, a co-planning process emerged between the students and trainee teachers. This process represented a transition from student voice as feedback to student voice as design and decision-making. Students' voice(s) were respected in terms of the classroom practice framework.

Another instance of student voice as design and decision-making in the curriculum involves respecting student voice in the learning process. Wood, Taylor, and Atkins (2018) explored power changes between secondary school students and teachers by describing their experiences of social action, in a study where students tended to focus on local community issues, such as poverty, democratic violence, refugee settlement support, issues relating to mental health and suicide, and the need for living. Students selected issues, interacted with the public in the library, shared their learning experiences, and gathered petition signatures. Wood et al. (2018) identified three broad approaches to social action learning – teacher-led, teacher-guided, and student-led – and examined the locus of power between teachers and students. They found that both students and teachers had agency, and insisted on the need for sharing power in the learning process.

As such, in curriculum practices involving design and decision-making with teachers and peers, students' voices are respected in terms of the classroom practice framework or in the learning process. Similar practical studies have been conducted (e.g., Fielding & Bragg, 2003; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015b; Nelson, 2018; Pekrul & Levin, 2007; Thomson & Gunter, 2006).

Design and Decision-Making in School Governance

As Thomson and Gunter (2006) noted, the tradition of school governance is much older and stronger in Australia. The newsletter *Connect* (1979–2021), edited by Roger Holdsworth, provided an overview of practices in Victoria, Australia, over 43 years. Since 1980, these documents have chronicled practices in school governance, detailing numerous instances of school design and decision-making from primary through high school. For instance, in *Connect* no. 18 (1982), there is a report on a symposium on school governance, titled 'Decision Making.' This issue reported on the Student Representative Committee in Maribyrnong High School as one of several practices. Each year level was represented by two students – a boy and a girl. Issues dealt with included discipline, improvements to the school, school uniforms, lunch, and a wet weather timetable (Athanasiou, 1982).

An issue with students' participation in school governance is the attachment to limited ideas of elitist and irrelevant practices under the name of 'representation' (Holdsworth, 2021). While the above example showed a Student Representative Committee, the forum opened to all students (also see, *Connect*, 2009). Similarly, the Action Research Team, including a large number of students, resonated with this issue.

In *Connect* no. 234, published in 2018, the Student Representative Council (SRC) and Action Team at Castlemaine Primary School were introduced. The school organized four action teams – Student Activities, Internal Affairs, External Affairs and Sustainability – each comprising two SRC members and non-elected students (Ball & Cox, 2018). According to a student's report, the Student Activities team initiated a grants program that allocated $200 to each class for the students to make decisions on the expenditure. Upon reviewing applications, outcomes varied – one class purchased new board games, another acquired a fish tank, while a mobile zoo was arranged for the junior classes (Chaffey & Kenneally, 2018). In this school, students designed the school life, with discussions extending from the SRC to all students. Thus, the tradition regarding school governance has evolved for more than 40 years, challenging the issues and addressing themes unique to each school.

Emerging Importance of Student Leadership

In this variation in the role of student voice, the concept of student leadership, introduced in the work of Dana Mitra becomes crucial. Mitra (2004, 2007) studied student voice in American high school reform, examining both school-based activity and community-based initiatives, such as "Unity of Youth" (Mitra, 2007, p. 737). The Unity of Youth developed campaigns addressing concerns about school-specific issues and created a Student Unity Center that provided students with services, including health services, academic support with tutoring and mentoring, after-school programs, job placement, an ethnic studies library, and conflict resolution resources (Mitra, 2007). Mitra's (2004, 2007) studies introduced the concept of student leadership. Mitra (2007)

stated that "if increasing student voice truly means sharing the ownership of school decision-making with students, then youth must do more than speak their minds about problems; they must have the opportunity to lead the way toward innovative solutions" (pp. 742–743). Mitra (2006, 2018) proposed a pyramid of student voice, which showed the level of student involvement, with the highest level of involvement being building capacity for leadership. Thus, in student voice as design and decision-making, students have a voice and participate in deciding matters relating to school governance and aspects that affect students' lives. Some other studies have reported similar practices (Brasof, 2015; Miyashita, Hamada, Kusakawa, & Urano, 2008; Urano, 2003).

While students engage in different ways, student voice as feedback, and student voice as design and decision-making, contribute to improving or changing the school system, rules, culture, classroom practices, and curricula. Moreover, student voice as design and decision-making directly contributes to resolving issues concerning these aspects.

Student Voice as Expressing Identity

This variation is based on the arguments of Michael Fielding (1999, 2001, 2011), who observed the potential of student voice to create a new reality in education. Additionally, he advocated for equality between students and teachers, a concept he called "radical collegiality" (Fielding, 1999, p. 24). Fielding (1999) stated:

Lastly, the collegiality between students and teachers for which I am arguing

includes not only a radical, manifest equality in which teachers are also learners

and learners also teachers, but also an equality which embraces difference as an important source of practical energy and intellectual creativity. (p. 24)

This statement conveys two meanings of equality between students and teachers. The second meaning interprets learning as a mutual and creative act, founded on recognizing the differences between teachers and students and their intellectual equality. Fielding (2001) argued that learning in school goes beyond what is currently required and creates an entirely different reality, which he called "prefigurative practice" (p. 107). He acknowledged prefigurative practice as an alternative to the administrative and market model of education (Dale & Fielding, 1989; Fielding, 2001). Furthermore, Fielding and Moss (2011) presented a vision of education called "radical education" (p. 39), with participatory democracy at its heart. They asserted that democracy is "a relational ethic that can and should pervade all aspects of everyday life" (Fielding & Moss, 2011, p.42). Fielding (2011) further discussed democracy not only as a way of addressing individual and collective requirements but also as living and being in the world[1]. Thus, democracy can be interpreted as something experienced daily by everyone in their lives and as being with others in the world.

Accordingly, based on Fielding's discussions (1999, 2001, 2011), learning in school is inherent in the process of inquiry and dialogue, not externally defined; it is a

---

[1] Fielding (1999) discussed democracy in education as a sense of the relationship between teachers, students, schools, and communities through egalitarianism and dialogue, in which the commons are reconsidered and reconstructed.

mutual and creative act of becoming and living within a community. This radical vision of education leads to a unique variation in student voice's role. When learning is a mutual and creative act, knowledge is created through reciprocal relationships and dialogue in which each voice can be respected and is more open to differences among people. It is important that students negotiate with others and create something valuable for themselves rather than achieving a specific goal. In this process, students express themselves or speak out rather than have a say or participate in decision-making. This variation in the role of student voice is germane to their identities. Here, identity pertains to both personal and communal or cultural identities. Fielding and Moss (2011) recognized the school as a place for co-construction and mentioned that "identity is not prior to society, nor innate, but is formed in and through relationships" (p. 117). Based on this reference, students may express and construct their identities by expressing or speaking out their views, imagination, ideas, and philosophy through learning.

Illustrative Cases of Student Voice as Expressing Identity

Examples of student voice as expressing identity can be shown through research from Australia and New Zealand, as discussed in the following sections.

The Golden Shaft

In a book about the work of Ballarat East High School in 1979 – *The Golden Shaft*, all students were invited to contribute to the book, and 300 young people participated in this project. Students became authors and expressed themselves in various ways in this 272-page book, providing recipes, oral histories, comments on

society, interpretations, poems, and stories (*Connect*, 1980). 'Poetry' was the largest

section in the book. One of those poems, 'Robin', shows a reflection made by a student

(who chose to remain anonymous).

Robin

Sitting on a window sill,

Looking at me.

What is he thinking?

I'm

Sitting on a seat

Staring at him.

Together we look at each other;

I wonder what would happen

if we talked?

(The Golden Shaft, 1979, p. 125)

John Martin (1979), the teacher who initiated this project, noted that poetry

enabled students to reveal themselves in ways they may not be able to do otherwise. In

this way, students express what they have in mind, what they feel and see in the world,

and what they imagine. This involves revealing their identities. These may be stories

that they rarely discuss in everyday conversations and can be an opportunity to reflect on themselves or the world in which they live.

Expressing pride in their community

A mural project in Victoria, Australia, was conducted at Lalor High School in 1980 and initiated by Ross Dana (teacher). The project emerged from the teacher's interest between the intersection of art and school, and their local community (Dana, 1981). This art and community project helped teachers connect the community with the school. The mural was based on positive aspects of local history. Through the process of creating a mural, the students developed a deeper understanding of their town and appreciated its positive aspects. One student stated:

> Though it was hard work, we should not only be proud of the mural itself but the message it illustrates … the fact that Lalor, right from its beginning, was unique and that we should be proud of the community support and help that early people illustrated. (Lozanovski, Y10, in Dana, 1981, p. 24)

This narrative shows how the student became proud of their town through a mural project. In this case, the mural project may have constructed students' identities, which, in turn, is depicted in the completed mural.

Cultural Identity

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Kidman (2012, 2018) explored the cultural identity of Māori teenagers, focusing on the land where they live, using visual images and interviews. The teenagers took photos and expressed their sense of self following

keywords they chose – land, belonging, journeys, the past, and 'mana' which is prestige or authority (Kidman, 2018, p. 61). Māori express an attachment to their tribal homelands by drawing on the notion of 'turangawaewae', described as home land, a standing place for the feet/a place to stand (Kidman, 2012, p. 193). One participant-photographer captured an image of a group of young people standing arm in arm, with their faces reflected in a puddle at their feet. Kidman (2012) interpreted this photograph, using the image and interviews, as follows: "The photographer wished to portray an inseparable relationship between Māori and their physical territories" (p. 194). This study provides an expression of young people's identities, and through this process, they can reconstruct or develop their identities, knowledge of their lands, and philosophies.

Realizing Democracy as Living and Being with Others in the World

It is noteworthy that the theme student voice as expressing identity connotes two significant aspects: (i) multimodal communication and (ii) the indivisibility of learning and identity. Thomson (2011) notes that, "all of us live in multi-mediated worlds with various opportunities and affordances for expression. Additionally, many people, including children, often find aesthetic of expression—for example, through the performing and visual arts" (pp. 23–24). More recently, children expressed their perspectives via collage and produced digital learning documentaries using iPads in a study around their own informal and everyday learning (Bourke, O'Neill, and Loveridge, 2018). Despite students acquiring language skills, they have the right to express themselves in a multimodal

manner. This broader view leads to an expansion of the role and impact of student voice.

The second significant aspect is the indivisibility of learning and identity. The recent study by Bourke et al. (2018; 2024) explored children's informal and everyday learning through co-inquiry with children and identified six dimensions of children's informal learning – CRISPA (Culture, Relationship, Identity, Strategies, Purpose, and Affect/emotion) (Bourke, O'Neill, & Loveridge, 2024). In this framework, Bourke et al. (2018) noted that "identity was clearly important to informal learning for every child" (p. 15). Moreover, children demonstrated that "they embodied themselves as learners across multiple and complex contexts" (Bourke, O'Neill, & Loveridge, 2018, p. 15). It is about the indivisibility of learning and identity. Student voice as expressing identity reflects Bourke et al.'s (2024) findings – the illustrative cases show the (re)construction of identity and sense of self through student voice, and such processes are surely recognized as part of the learning. Thus, student voice as expressing identity is respected in the learning process. Creation occurred visibly as an expression or invisibly as a new feeling born within a student. This led children to (re)consider and (re)construct their way of life in the community and knowledge.

As Fielding (1999, 2001, 2011) describes, learning is not determined externally (or by top-down methods) but is inherent in their inquiries, which require a reciprocal and ethical act. From these perspectives, this paper proposes that student voice as expressing identity could contribute to (re)constructing and creating students' way of life

in the community and knowledge. In other words, it contributes to realizing democracy as living and being with others in the world.

Discussion

This paper examined three variations in the student voice's role and their contributions. Table 1 summarizes the contributions, key perspectives, and features of each variation.

Table 1

Contributions and Key perspectives of Each Variation of Student Voice's Role

Variations	**Student voice as feedback**	**Student voice as design & decision-making**	**Student voice as expressing identity**
Students' voices are respected…	In terms of the framework of school, curriculum, and classroom practices	In the learning process	
Contributions	- to improve and change school condition, system, curriculum, and classroom practices	- to improve and change school condition, system, curriculum, and classroom practices - to identify and resolve issues by students	- to (re)construct and create students' way of life in the community and knowledge - to realize democracy as living and being with others in the world
Key perspectives	- co-construction with a dialogic nature in a partnering relationship	- to open to "all" students - the concept of leadership	- to express in a multimodal way - the indivisibility between learning and identity
Features	- to provide feedback on students' experiences - to speak out	- to have a say - to take initiative - to participate in deciding matters relating to school governance and what affects students' lives	- to express their views, imaginations, ideas, and philosophies - to speak out

xxx

The contributions of student voice to transforming education had variations, dependent on the roles and functions afforded to student voice. This distinction is crucial because transforming education involves not only changing the school system, curriculum and the way to practice in classroom but also enquiring about the learning itself. Therefore, if only the former elements are addressed, the substance of what students learn may remain unchanged, even if the methods or conditions of learning evolve. Consequently, this could reduce school improvement to a trivialization in accordance with the dominant discourse, as some studies showed the internalized dominant discourse among students (Kehoe, 2015; Thomson & Gunter, 2006). This means the importance of recognizing the contributions of each role within student voice will enable a more comprehensive consideration of educational transformation without losing sight of the big picture. Student voice as feedback, and student voice as design and decision-making, contribute to improving and changing schools, curricula, and classroom practices. Furthermore, the latter also contributes to identifying and resolving issues that affect students, including their local and global challenges, such as experiences of social action (Wood et al., 2018). Conversely, student voice as expressing identity does not necessarily involve solving issues, instead requires students to express themselves, their communities, and their cultures. It is related to relationships with others and ethical considerations; therefore, it contributes to realizing democracy as living and being with others in the world. Additionally, each variation holds key perspectives that the substantial accumulation of past research has taught.

This paper does not imply that one variation is superior or inferior; rather, all variations are required to transform education. It is crucial to recognize the impact of student voice. Nevertheless, the importance of the third variation, student voice as expressing identity, should be emphasized, since it has the potential to enhance student learning and their own understanding of that learning. Additionally, promoting local knowledge related to students' identities respects multiculturalism and diversity. Such an educational view is valuable from the perspective of social justice and democracy, especially in an era where a performance-based educational culture dominates.

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, researchers and practitioners have explored the transformative potential of student voice and implemented numerous practices with young people. The results of these discussions and practices relied on the great accumulation of previous research and hope to contribute to the further development of this field.

The three roles of student voice and each of their contributions examined in this paper enable the consideration of another view of student voice. Student voice as feedback contributes to improving and changing school condition/systems, curriculum, and classroom practices, premising co-construction with a dialogic nature in a partnering relationship. When students shift from being active respondents to explicit (co)researchers, student voice as design and decision-making emerges, and they take on leadership roles. In addition to the contributions of the previous variation, this role enables students to take direct action on issues. Student voice as expressing identity

requires breaking away from curriculum-based prescribed learning or regulated knowledge. It has been identified that student voice as expressing identity realizes democracy as living and being with others.

For future practice, practical considerations about student voice as expressing identity are needed, involving students, teachers, the public, and policymakers as partners. In this context, it is essential to examine not only the relationship between teachers and students but also the connections between schools and communities.

Acknowledgements

Funding

References

Athanasiou, G. (1982). Decision making 2. Maribyrnong high. *Connect*, 18, 10–11.

Ball, J. & Cox, J. (2018). Accepting responsibilities; taking action. *Connect, 234*, 7.

Berryman, M., & Eley, E. (2018). Gathering and listening to the voices of Māori youth:
What are the system responses? In R. Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.), *Radical
collegiality through student voice educational experience, policy and practice* (pp.
103–126). Springer.

Biddle, C., & Mitra, D. (2015). Implementing middle school youth-adult partnerships: A
study of two programs focused on social change. *Middle Grades Review*, 1(2).
https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/mgreview/vol1/iss2/6/

Bourke, R., & Loveridge, J. (Eds.). (2018a). *Radical collegiality through student voice
educational experience, policy and practice*. Springer.

Bourke, R., & Loveridge, J. (2018b). Students' voice shifting the gaze from measured
learning to the point of learning. In R. Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.), *Radical
collegiality through student voice educational experience, policy and practice* (pp.
143–157). Springer.

Bourke, R., & Loveridge, J. (2018c). Beyond the official language of learning: Teachers
engaging with student voice research. In R. Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.),
*Radical collegiality through student voice educational experience, policy and
practice* (pp. 159–177). Springer.

Bourke, R., O'Neill, J., & Loveridge, J. (2024). *Understanding Informal Learning:
Appreciating Everyday Learners*. Emerald Press.

Bourke, R., O'Neill, J., & Loveridge, J. (2018). The impact of children's everyday learning on teaching and learning in classrooms and across schools. *Teaching & Learning Research Initiative*. http://www.tlri.org.nz/tlri-research/research-completed/school-sector/impact-children%E2%80%99s-everyday-learning-teaching-and

Bragg, S. (2010). *Consulting young people: A literature review* (2nd ed.). CCE.

Brasof, M. (2015). *Student voice and school governance distributing leadership to youth and adults*. Routledge.

Brooker, R., & Macdonald, D. (1999). Did we hear you?: Issues of student voice in a curriculum innovation. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 31*(1), 83–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/002202799183313

Carnell, E. (2005). Understanding and enriching young people's learning: Issues, complexities and challenges®. *Improving Schools, 8*(3), 269–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480205060440

Chaffey, E. & Kenneally, J. (2018, December). Accepting responsibilities; taking action. *Connect, 234*, 7–9.

Chopra, C. (2016). Creating a shared ownership for learning: Instructionally focused partnerships. *International Journal of Student Voice*, *1*(1).

Connect (Holdsworth, R. ed.). (1980, February). Printing a book. (p. 9). Australia.

Connect (Holdsworth, R. ed.). (2009, October). Refocusing the SRC, (pp. 7-9). Australia.

Cook-Sather, A. (2018). Tracing the evolution of student voice in educational research. In R. Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.), *Radical collegiality through student voice educational experience, policy and practice* (pp. 17–38). Springer.

Czerniawski, G., & Kidd, W. (Eds.). (2011). *The student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide*. Emerald.

Dale, R., & Fielding, M. (1989). Case studies and initiatives: Overview of section two. In C. Harber & R. Meighan (Eds.), *The democratic school: Educational management and the practice of democracy*. Education Now Books.

Dana, R. (1981, October). Art and the community: Lalor High Mural Project. *Connect*, *11*, 23–24.

Fielding, M. (1999). Radical collegiality: Affirming teaching as an inclusive professional practice. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 26*(2), 1–34. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03219692

Fielding, M. (2001). Beyond the Rhetoric of Student Voice: New departure or new consultation in the transformation of 21st century schooling? *FORUM, 43*(2), 100–109. https://doi.org/10.2304/forum.2001.43.2.1

Fielding, M. (2004). 'New wave' student voice and the renewal of civic society. *London Review of Education, 2*(3), 197–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/1474846042000302834

Fielding, M. (2011). Student voice and the possibility of democratic education: Re-narrating forgotten histories, developing alternative futures. In G. Czerniawski & W. Kidd (Eds.), *The student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide* (pp. 3–17). Emerald.

Fielding, M., & Bragg, S. (2003). *Students as researchers: Making a difference*. Pearson Publishing.

Fielding, M., & Moss, P. (2011). *Radical education and the common school: A democratic alternative*. Routledge.

Flutter, J., & Rudduck, J. (2004). *Consulting pupils: What's in it for schools?* Routledge.

Flynn, P. (2018). Marginalized youth speak back through research: Empowerment and transformation of educational experience. In R. Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.), *Radical collegiality through student voice educational experience, policy and practice* (pp. 71–85). Springer.

Galloway, M., Pope, D., & Osberg, J. (2007). Stressed-out students-SOS: Youth perspectives on changing school climates. In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school* (pp. 611–634). Springer.

Godfrey, D. (2011). Enabling students' right to participate in a large sixth form college: Different voices, mechanisms and agendas. In G. Czerniawski & W. Kidd (Eds.), *The student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide* (pp. 237–247). Emerald.

Gonzalez, T. E., Hernandez-Saca, D. I., & Artiles, A. J. (2017). In search of voice: Theory and methods in K-12 student voice research in the US, 1990–2010. *Educational Review, 69*(4), 451–473. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2016.1231661

Hadfield, M., & Haw, K. (2001). 'Voice', young people and action research. *Educational Action Research, 9*(3), 485–502. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790100200165

Holdsworth, R. (Ed.). (1979–2021). *Connect, 1-250*, Australia.

Holdsworth, R. (1999). Enhancing effective student participation: 33 curriculum approaches. *Connect*, *116*, 6–9, Australia.

Holdsworth, R. (2017a). Terms and intentions. *Connect*, *223*, 18–21, Australia.

Holdsworth, R. (2017b). What's the evidence? *Connect*, *224–225*, 5–26, Australia.

Holdsworth, R. (2018). Student voice, agency, participation. *Connect*, *229*, 22–25, Australia.

Holdsworth, R. (2021). Give me a place to stand and I'll move the earth. *Connect*, *250*, 6–8, Australia.

Holquist, S. E., Mitra, D. L., Conner, J., & Wright, N. L. (2023). What is student voice anyway? The intersection of student voice practices and shared leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 59(4), 703–743. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X231178023

Jones, M.-A., & Hall, V. (2022). Redefining student voice: Applying the lens of critical pragmatism. *Oxford Review of Education, 48*(5), 570–586. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2021.2003190

Kane, R. G., & Maw, N. (2005). Making sense of learning at secondary school: Involving students to improve teaching practice. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 35*(3), 311–322. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640500319024

Kehoe, I. (2015). The cost of performance? Students' learning about acting as change agents in their schools. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 36*(1), 106–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2013.841356

Kidman, J. (2012). The land remains: Māori youth and the politics of belonging.

AlterNative, 8(2), 189–202. https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011200800207

Kidman, J. (2018). Representing youth voices in Indigenous community research. In R.

Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.), Radical collegiality through student voice

educational experience, policy and practice (pp. 55–69). Springer.

Lee, L., & Zimmerman, M. (1999). A new vison for student voice. Education Canada,

39(2), 34–35.

Lundy, L. (2018). In defence of tokenism? Implementing children's right to participate in

collective decision-making. Childhood, 25(3), 340–354.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568218777292

Martin, J. (1979). The golden shaft. BEES Publications.

Mitra, D. (2004). The significance of students: Can increasing "student voice" in schools

lead to gains in youth development? Teachers College Record, 106(4), 651–688

Mitra, D. (2006). Increasing student voice and moving toward youth leadership.

Prevention Researcher, 13(1), 7–10.

Mitra, D. (2007). Student voice in school reform: From listening to leadership. In D.

Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), International handbook of student experience

in elementary and secondary school (pp. 727–744). Springer.

Mitra, D. (2018). Student voice in secondary schools: The possibility for deeper change.

Journal of Educational Administration, 56(5), 473–487.

https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2018-0007

Mitra, D., & McCormick, P. (2017). Ethical dilemmas of youth participatory action

research in a democratic setting. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,*

21(3), 248–258. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1260835

Miyashita, Y., Hamada, I., Kusakawa, T., & Urano, T. (2008). *Creating schools through*

participation and cooperation: Creating 'open schools' and classroom reform

initiatives. [Sanka to kyoudou no galtukou dukuri: "Hirakareta gattukoudukuri" to

jyugyoukaikaku no torikumi (in Japanese)]. Soudo-bunnka.

Mockler, N., & Groundwater-Smith, S. (2015a). *Engaging with student voice in research,*

education and community: Beyond Legitimation and Guardianship. Springer.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01985-7

Mockler, N., & Groundwater-Smith, S. (2015b). Student voice beyond school. In N.

Mockler & S. Groundwater-Smith (Eds.), *Engaging with student voice in*

research, education and community: Beyond Legitimation and Guardianship (pp.

69–82). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01985-7_6

Morgan, J. (2011). Students training teachers. In G. Czerniawski & W. Kidd (Eds.), *The*

student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide (pp. 225–236).

Emerald.

Mullis, G. (2011). Student voice: Changing practice and developing partnerships. In G.

Czerniawski & W. Kidd (Eds.), *The student voice handbook: Bridging the*

academic/practitioner divide (pp. 209–224). Emerald.

Nelson, E. (2018). Teachers and power in student voice: "Finger in the pulse, not

children under the thumb." In R. Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.), *Radical collegiality*

through student voice educational experience, policy and practice (pp. 197–216). Springer.

Pearce, T. C., & Wood, B. E. (2019). Education for transformation: An evaluative framework to guide student voice work in schools. *Critical Studies in Education, 60*(1), 113–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1219959

Pekrul, S., & Levin, B. (2007). Building student voice for school improvement. In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school* (pp. 711–726). Springer.

Raymond, L. (2001). Student Involvement in School Improvement: From data source to significant voice. *FORUM, 43*(2), 58–61. https://doi.org/10.2304/forum.2001.43.2.6

Robinson, J., Down, B., & Smyth, J. (2018). 'Shaking up' neoliberal policy in schools: Looking for democratic alternatives in Jacinta's satchel. *Global Studies of Childhood, 8*(4), 392–403. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610618814841

Rudduck, J. (2001). Student and school improvement: "Transcending the cramped conditions of the time." *Improving Schools, 4*(2), 7–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/136548020100400203

Rudduck, J. (2002). The transformation potential of consulting young people about teaching, learning and schooling. *The Sera Lecture*, 123–137.

Rudduck, J., Chaplain, R., & Wallace, G. (1996). *School improvement: What can pupils tell us?* David Fulton Publishers.

Rudduck, J., Demetriou, H., Pedder, D., & the Network Project Team. (2003). Student

perspectives and teacher practices: The transformative potential. *McGill Journal*

of Education, 38(2), 274–288.

Rudduck, J., & Flutter, J. (2000). Pupil participation and pupil perspective: "Carving a

new order of experience." *Cambridge Journal of Education, 30*(1), 75–89.

https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640050005780

Rudduck, J., & McIntyre, D. (2007). *Improving learning through consulting pupils*.

Routledge.

Smith, J. (2007). Toward the pedagogically engaged school: Listening to student voice

as a positive response to disengagement and "dropping out"? In D. Thiessen &

A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), *International handbook of student experience in*

elementary and secondary school (pp. 635–658). Springer.

The golden shaft. (1979). Robin. (p. 125). BEES Publications.

Thiessen, D., & Cook-Sather, A. (2007). *International handbook of student experience*

in elementary and secondary school. Springer.

Thomson, P. (2011). Coming to terms with "voice." In G. Czerniawski & W. Kidd (Eds.),

The student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide (pp. 19–

30). Emerald.

Thomson, P., & Gunter, H. (2006). From "consulting pupils" to "pupils as researchers": A

situated case narrative. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(6), 839–856.

https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920600989487

Thomson, P., & Gunter, H. (2007). The methodology of students-as-researchers:

Valuing and using experience and expertise to develop methods. *Discourse:*

xxx

Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 28(3), 327–342.

https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300701458863

Urano, T. (2003). *Creating 'open schools'*. [Hirakareta Gattukoudukuri (in Japanese)]. Doujidai-sha.

Wisby, E. (2011). Student voice and new models of teacher professionalism. In G. Czerniawski & W. Kidd (Eds.), *The student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide* (pp. 31–44). Emerald.

Wood, B., Taylor, R., & Atkins, R. (2018). Student voice, citizenship and regulated spaces. In R. Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.), *Radical collegiality through student voice educational experience, policy and practice* (pp. 179–196). Springer.

xxx

The International Journal of Student Voice (IJSV) is a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal publishing on the ways in which students co-lead their schools and communities by collaborating with teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders to define problems and develop potential solutions and/or take the lead on making change in their schools and communities. We define students to include a wide range of young people, from early childhood to university studies. Taking as foundational the right of students to develop their voices and leadership capabilities and take an active role in analyzing and shaping their educational experiences, the journal publishes research related to pupil/learner voice, youth-adult partnerships, child rights, youth participatory action research, students as activists and change agents, and related fields. Likewise, we acknowledge the importance of adult educational stakeholders who share this belief and work to make the development of student voice, participation, and partnership a reality.

IJSV, established in 2015 by the Pennsylvania State University, welcomes pieces from researchers, practitioners, and students including traditional research-focused articles, practitioner reflections, and multi-media submissions. Peer review in this journal will include feedback from researchers, practitioners and students. All articles must have a user-friendly abstract that is understood by all audiences. Articles will be expected to end with a set of discussion questions to encourage online dialogue. Each submission will include a discussion forum to encourage conversation about the submissions.

For additional information, please go to the IJSV website: https://ijsv.psu.edu

Or contact Dana Mitra at: dana@psu.edu