From Data Source to Co-Researchers? Tracing the Shift from 'Student Voice' to Student-Teacher Partnerships in Educational Action Research

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Abstract
This paper provides a review of the concept of student voice as it has been represented in *Educational Action Research* from the 1990s to the present day. Contextualised within an exploration of the challenges posed by educational action research that incorporates student voice in the current age of accountability as reflected and understood in academia, we explore issues of power and authority, issues of process and issues of ownership as they emerge in the literature. We note ways in which these challenges are manifest in primary and secondary schooling and in tertiary education. Finally, we survey some recent representations of student voice in *EARJ,* observing something of a shift from earlier conceptualisations of students as 'data source' to a more active involvement as co-researchers and joint constructors of knowledge, progressing toward more active student-teacher partnerships.

In this paper we offer a review and synthesis of 'student voice' work as it has been positioned and reported in the *Educational Action Research Journal (EARJ)* over the past two decades. It is crafted in three parts. In the, initial, 'context and backdrop section' we briefly explore some dimensions of the current terrain of higher education, arguing that engaging with student voice is both risky and challenging business in this troubling age. We also note that the democratic and participatory dimensions of action research have long been supported by the journal, as has an understanding that action research is necessarily tethered to ideas of improvement and reform.

Following this, we explore the ways that the challenge of honouring and reporting on educational action research incorporating student voice as partners and agents has been picked up historically in *EARJ*, using three clusters of key issues as an organising structure: these being the nature of power and authority as it is exercised in educational settings (in the main schools); the processes that can be employed to authentically engage students as partners in reform; and, the ways in which the ownership of initiatives are best understood. Finally, we explore some of the more recent iterations of student voice that have appeared in *EARJ*, highlighting recent shifts and new directions, suggesting that there has been a progression from students acting as sources of data for action researching practitioners towards becoming, themselves, active co-researchers.

Context and Backdrop
Now in its 23rd Year, *EARJ* has been a vehicle for exploring the interplay of research and practice in educational settings across the world. The journal has maintained a mission to build effective bridges between academics and practitioners, by drawing

attention to the results of participatory research that is action based. As well, the journal provides opportunities to discuss larger research questions through its theoretical resources component.

In contemporary times, *EARJ* faces the impact of the ranking, evaluating, and categorizing that has arisen internationally from the comparison of journals for the purposes of determining academic productivity. This is particularly problematic for a journal that has avowed to be inclusive of the field of practice, while still, of course, maintaining its standards in relation to the validity of its reported studies. A particular feature of the *Educational Action Research Journal* has been its tradition of collaborative writing that engages both the academy and members of the related professions; this can be seen as the results of partnerships that recognise and affirm the contribution that each may make, allowing for the investigation of matters of relevance that enables a distinction between what *should* be done and what *can* be done in recognition of the "responsibility that professional knowledge brings with it" (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002, p.100).

As the late Shirley Grundy (2007, p.81) reminds us, cultures of audit and accountability embedded within the higher education sector internationally often undermine these kinds of partnerships and participation. She argued, in relation to Australia but we see this argument as equally valid in international contexts, that "universities need to reclaim their right to engage in partnerships with 'grass roots communities'", concluding:

> In Australian Universities in the early 21st century the 'audit culture' is killing us softly and hastening the death of participation in social and intellectual life. Yet, as I suggest, participatory action research and the action of those of us who pursue it can help reform the audit culture and curb the current demise of higher education in Australia.

Thus, universities at the beginning of the twenty-first century find themselves in an unenviable place where they are expected to meet what are often contradictory and problematic demands. Intensified pressure from government for them to be more efficient, to be more inclusive and to be more responsive to the requirements of the market can be located alongside the exponential growth of human knowledge, the academic stock in trade, via complex information and communication technologies. As well, universities are seen as a community investment, which, justifiably, should also offer a community service. University academics are expected to be active researchers, contributing to knowledge production, competent teachers who develop in their students both discipline specific and generic skills and willing participants in their communities.

There is, potentially, a point where the academic practitioner makes a decision to concentrate upon knowledge production or pedagogy seeing little possibility of pursuing both well; often with the latter being at the subordination of the former. As to community service, itself, this function runs a poor third in the higher education race. However, this does not have to be the case. It is possible to engage simultaneously in research, in pedagogy and in community service if the research is itself about forms of teaching and learning in tertiary settings that more widely engage

with the community and in particular children and young people who have a considerable stake in schooling and education more widely.

Currently, then, in terms of academic publishing, there seem to be 'rules of the game' that constrain and inhibit those who would wish to participate as researchers, teachers and responsible community members. All this is in spite of efforts to determine impact otherwise. For example, in the UK 'impact' is defined as "an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, heath, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia" (REF2014, 2011, p. 48) a seemingly more robust and inclusive notion than that which tends to be promulgated through research assessment exercises.

Clearly, however, there are other 'rules to the game' that *EARJ* observes, such as those related to respecting and acknowledging the contribution to professional knowledge that inquiry may contribute being above and beyond the modes of knowledge as understood by those such as Gibbons Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott, P. & Trow (1994). Gibbons et. al. identified two forms of knowledge, namely 'mode 1 knowledge', founded upon the orthodoxies of discipline-based scientific inquiry and driven by the norms and conventions of those disciplines; and 'mode 2 knowledge', concerned with the identification and solution of practical problems in the lived professional lives of practitioners and organizations unconstrained by the boundaries of single disciplines with their many rules and customary practices. Even so, in the understanding of Gibbons et. al., mode 2 knowledge production lies not in the hands of the practitioners themselves, but is that which is produced by elite professional organisations.

However, at a later point Gibbons (1999) demonstrated a willingness to accommodate to a wider engagement in knowledge production by arguing that 'socially robust knowledge can only be produced by much more sprawling socio/scientific constituencies with open frontiers'. This understanding is well recognised by Edwards, Sebba & Rickinson (2007) when they note that problems in practice are mutable, in that working *on* them produces changes *in* them as the range of interpretations grows as more and more participants join in the research enterprise. As we have argued elsewhere, "knowledge is not some sort of portable self-contained *thing* that may be transmitted by technically controlled conduits, but is socially constructed and located in socio-historical space" (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009, p.48).

Playing the knowledge game is a complex but necessary enterprise when participatory action research becomes one that engages with a greater and ever increasing range of stakeholders. As Reason put it:

> As soon as we touch upon the question of participation we have to entertain and work with issues of power, of oppression, of gender; we are confronted with the limitations of our skill, with the rigidities of our own and others' behaviour patterns, with the other pressing demands on our limited time, with the hostility or indifference of our organizational contexts. We live out our contradictions, struggling to bridge the gap between our dreams and reality, to realize the values we espouse.... 'How do you actually do it?' It is as if many people feel intuitively that a participatory approach is right for their work and are hungry for

stories and accounts that will provide models and exemplars. (Reason, 1994, p. 2)

It is against this backdrop that we offer a review of work relating to participatory research that includes children and young people. We recognise that if the 'trade-off' that occurs when academic and field-based partners research and publish in partnership with one another is difficult and problematic, that on a range of fronts this is amplified when children and young people become participants in the inquiry with a voice in its publication. This is a challenge, however, with which *EARJ* has engaged, and in this review article we aim to chart this engagement over the past two decades, drawing on 21 articles published over that time frame.

Before we begin to work with the articles in detail, a note about our approach to and understanding of the concept of 'student voice' work. Elsewhere, we have argued strongly for authentic approaches to student voice to push beyond what we have termed 'legitimation and guardianship' (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015), whereby students' perspectives may be incorporated as 'data source' (Fielding, 2011) without offering opportunities for young people to be engaged as active participants, co-researchers, or joint authors. In short, we believe that authentic student voice work involves the building of generative relationships and the joint engagement of adults and young people in the research enterprise, and it is from this standpoint that our discussion and critique of student voice work emerges.

Taking up the challenge
We take as the departure point for this discussion the special issue on young people's voices prepared in 2007 (volume 15, issue 3) to commemorate the extraordinary contribution of the late Jean Rudduck, particularly with reference to the claim that children and young people have a right to be consulted and heard in relation to educational experiences with which they have been engaged. Michael Fielding's introductory piece is not only a tribute to Rudduck and her work but also reminds us that she created conditions whereby educational practitioners were enjoined to more fully understand their assumptions of 'what a pupil is' (Rudduck, Chaplain & Wallace, 1996, p.177). This is no trivial matter. The relationship between teachers and their students are undoubtedly complex and can greatly vary from one context to another, but Rudduck, along with her colleagues, contended that it was essential, from a young person's perspective, that the conditions for learning within these relationships needed to satisfy six principles: respect, fairness, autonomy, intellectual challenge, social support and security (Fielding, 2007a, p.325).

As Fielding reminds us, Rudduck held to the argument that students had a right to be heard and listened to. In this she followed the position advocated by Lawrence Stenhouse with his stance that "the first claim of the school is that of its pupils for whose welfare the school exists" (Stenhouse, 1983, p. 153). This view was even prior to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that entitles children to a broad range of rights and in particular, Article 12, that states that every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and have their views taken seriously (see Lansdown, 2005a, 2005b).

In his paper Fielding traces the development of Rudduck's thinking, much of which was the result of important partnerships with Julia Flutter and later Donald McIntyre.

Together, they addressed the essentially inhospitable policy climate with respect to the management of education through national curriculum and testing regimes in England. With some modesty Fielding also weaves through the article his own contribution, that along with that of Rudduck, expressed a caution regarding power, authenticity and inclusion as superficially understood by those who would employ student voice as a means of maintaining and reinforcing the *status quo*. Of course, these few sentences do little credit to the thoroughness of Fielding's evocation of Jean Rudduck's contribution to the field of student voice as it reflected

> … her fierce integrity, her sense of fun, her kindness, her modesty and her resolute belief in the beauty of life and the necessity of young people's contribution to a 'new order of experience' (Fielding, 2007a, p. 335).

Fielding points to Rudduck's deeply held conviction that 'pupil voice' was about much, much more than an openness to hearing students' perspectives, that rather, this 'new order of experience' was about reconfiguring schooling and education such that they come to model and mirror democracy itself, illustrated in this quotation from *Consulting Young People: What's in it for Schools?*:

> The pupil voice movement represents a new departure because it is based on the premise that schools should reflect the democratic structures in society at large. Under this conception the school becomes a community of participants engaged in the common endeavour of learning. Similarly, where the student voice is attended to, learning comes to be seen as a more holistic process with broad aims rather than a progression through a sequence of narrowly focused performance targets. (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004, p. 135)

We see three clusters of issues as central to this argument, issues that indeed are central to discussions of student voice more generally, mainly in the context of schooling, but also in tertiary education, namely issues of power and authority, issues of process, and issues of 'ownership'. As Cook-Sather has noted "If teachers have little power and agency when it comes to participating in processes of school reform, students have less" (2009, p.225). These matters we shall use as organising structures for our subsequent discussion of student voice work as it appears historically in *EARJ*.

Issues of power and authority

Much of the work discussed in relation to listening to young people and acting on what they have to say regarding the conditions of their learning and engagement in schooling has been well established and can be characterised as being of a transactional nature. Indeed, a number of earlier *EARJ* articles are of this kind, several of which are discussed in relation to processes at a later point in this analysis. Enabling school students to participate in research beyond being consulted, such that the inquiry will have the potential to be transformational, takes both a particular kind of courage and a sensitivity to the realpolitik of the construction, the policy conditions of the day and exercise of power .

As Groundwater-Smith, Dockett & Bottrell (2015) observed in their exploration of the researchable question in relation to research with children and young people (pp. 55 – 74) there are many definitions and ways of conceptualising such inquiry and that much of this research is highly managed by adults, who hold a disproportionate amount of power. However, they argue that one of the features of participatory research with children and young people is its:

> … claim to redress some of the power differentials identified in other research and that more recent conceptualisations of power and power relations have moved away from notions of power as a commodity, possessed by some (adults, researchers), exercised over others (children, research participants) and subject to re-distribution (p.59).

Rather they urged recognition of the many ways in which power is exercised by children, young people and adults, through points of resistance and confrontation, as well as compliance. Thus, when we consider the rights of children and young people to participate in investigating the conditions of their learning, the work of Bland and Atweh in Australia (2007) Kilpatrick, McCartan, McAlister & McKeown in Northern Ireland (2007) and Lind in Canada (2007) is critical. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon researchers to themselves maintain a stance that continues to interrogate the conditions and assumptions upon which 'student voice' is maintained; thus the theoretical resource in this edition of *EARJ* by Cruddas (2007) is an essential contribution.

Bland and Atweh's work is not new to readers of *EARJ* (see Atweh, 2003) and has been widely published further afield (Bland and Atweh, 2004; Atweh, Bland, Smith and Woodward, 2012). Their inquiries have been in relation to investigating with young people their under-representation in higher education and the barriers that exist to make school completion possible, and thus restrict their admission to higher education. They have noticed the ways in which schools, when they do draw on student voice choose to draw upon those from the dominant culture and devalue those from subordinate cultures (p.338) and add "consultation of students at all levels of schooling is becoming a more normalised aspect of decision making, through for instance, representative student councils and the inclusion of student representative on some school governing bodies" (p. 339). This matter of participatory capital is now critical in the arguments regarding an engaged citizenship and relates to members of society having a sense of agency and involvement in making decisions that affect them (McMurray & Niens, 2012). This is a compelling argument when it comes to schooling where children and young people have no choice in whether they will attend or not.

In their discussion of a peer research methodology, Kilpatrick et al (2007) also pay close attention to marginalised young people's voices as a means of generating social action in the context of alternative education provisions in Northern Ireland. Their strategy was to recruit peer researchers who would assist with the development of questionnaires and interview schedules, conduct field work and make a contribution to the management of the project, support the development of the analysis and the dissemination of findings (p. 355). They argued that peer researchers would transcend the problematics related to the exercise of power normally associated with relationships between adults and young people. Furthermore, they argued that recruits would have a greater familiarity with the local area, its norms and characteristics. They claimed, "the peer researchers displayed skill in their ability to reflect upon and represent their frustrations and explain experiences of setbacks more powerfully to the funders, with a general level of acceptance than perhaps the academics on the research team have achieved" (p.363). In effect, this study was one that could be seen to add value to a funded adult research activity while at the same time still positioning the school students as subjects of the research rather than participants in the sense of Bland and Atweh's study.

Also located in an alternative high school, in this case in Canada, Lind (2007) adopted a participative approach in the form of a partnership between student, teacher and nurse co-researchers, drawing upon a belief that having a sense of power and resilience was critical to young people in their adolescent years – in particular young people who had hitherto been alienated and marginalised. The study draws upon a cognitivist theory of learning concerned with complex cognitive processes such as thinking, problem solving, concept formation and information processing allied to a constructivist approach that suggests meaningful learning is related to experience and the importance of interest, autonomy and peer interaction (Ertmer & Newby, 2013), utilising "hermeneutic circles of analysis and interpretation" that required multiple readings of what had been revealed. Furthermore, it significantly interrupted notions of power being accorded unilaterally to the adults with the possibility of stifling voices that otherwise might question sedimented norms and practices.

In the theoretical resource that does much to contribute to our thinking regarding issues of power and authority, Cruddas (2007) states her interest in "knowing more about what the dialogic spaces look like in practice and how teachers and students are creating these – particularly through the methodology of participatory action research" (p.480). In doing this she both builds upon the work of Atweh and his colleagues and that of Michelle Fine whose research has been organised around the tenets of participatory action research and examines how youth think about and contest injustice in schools, communities and prisons in the United States (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). In her introduction Cruddas cites the current policy position in England that makes it a requirement for principals, governors and local authorities to "give children and young people a say" (p.480) a policy that fails to acknowledge the ways in which authentic bridges need to be built in encounters between adults and children and young people and how difficult this is (Groundwater-Smith, Mayes and Arya-Pinatyh, 2014).

Using studies in semiotics as enunciated by Bakhtin (1981) & Voloshinov (1973) Cruddas argues that we need to take account of speakers' (in this case, children and young people in relationships with adults) place in the context of a complex world surrounded by ongoing cultural and political and ideological language. She recommends that we more critically examine theories of power, of paternalism and tokenism and of the place of sedimented histories. In this sense her writing resonates with that of Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer & Bristol (2014) when they examine the 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' that emerge when 'architectures of practice' are accounted for, understanding that social practices always occur in particular times and contexts.

No small matter is that of the position of teachers in a world that perhaps honours them less than they deserve. In the issue immediately following that which was devoted to young people's voices published in 2007 Sara Bragg (2007) who has a long-standing commitment to exploring pupil voice in English schools, identified the resistance of many teachers when they perceive that not only do they have to relinquish something of their power in the classroom, but also may need to reconfigure their identity. One incident followed another as the children perceived that they could develop new and at times confronting relationships with their teachers. One such example was of a teacher being affronted when one of her pupils offered her

a report card on her teaching, complete with targets. She saw that "this pupil voice thing was turning things on their head" (p.513). Bragg points out that teachers are accustomed to not only evaluating students' work, but evaluating the students themselves. This can be more than a little discomforting and put at odds the notion of the school as a harmonious, child-centred environment where teachers act as custodians and care-givers thus troubling what had hitherto been thought of as calm waters.

In examining earlier issues of *EARJ* it is clear that these are not entirely new ideas. Collins (2004), in his research that included students, argued that participation requires a sensitivity to power differentials and language in order to engage in negotiating planning, roles and enactment. This he represents as an ethical matter that is ecologically interconnected. He not only provides evidence of the engagement of very young children in discussions of pedagogical practices that affect them, but also is able to indicate that while there is an effort to establish a parity of esteem there are power differentials that need to be acknowledged and understood.

Looking to later examples of the disparities of power and the manifestation of authority in the *EARJ,* Santos (2012) invokes the work of Hannah Arendt to unravel the distortions of politics, storytelling and publicity in relation to participative action research in Columbia and, in particular, its publication. Santos questions the often held belief that a form of narrative inquiry will be liberatory for the participants; arguing instead that "unfolding the narratives" through a series of micro-political lenses as a form of dialogue is critical. Such a process examines, among other things, the narrative "between the lines" (pp. 119 – 122) that may reveal the ways in which those who have a disproportionate power will influence what has been represented, in spite of the narrators believing that the power has been theirs. By delving into the various layers of meaning Santos asserts that by exploring continuities and relationships it is possible to untangle these complex webs in ways that will enable authentic action to emerge.

Issues of process
As Santos (2012) argues, when considering power and authority, it is also essential that the inquiry processes that are adopted are themselves critically examined. We find that this has been the case for well over a decade of *EARJ* publications, and in this section explore some of those articles that demonstrate an attention to processes that provide opportunities for young people to find, develop and utilise their voice in and through educational action research.

Kember et al (1996), for example, were interested in identifying ways in which tertiary students might find their voice through reflective writing. Five courses were examined:

- A BSc course for post-experience nurses
- A postgraduate course for clinical educators
- Physiotherapy undergraduate students
- Radiography undergraduate students
- Occupational therapy undergraduate students

As a process, reflective writing is well understood as a means of developing insight into the learning of students, be they in the tertiary, secondary or primary sectors. Kember et al addressed a number of the dilemmas that might be faced including the problematics of assessment and identified as a significant challenge the contrast between reflective writing and that normally required of students:

> We came to see reflective writing as an ability which took time to develop and for some was quite hard to achieve. Formal education normally requires a style of writing which is virtually the antithesis of reflective writing. Many students find it hard to unlearn their conception of impersonal academic writing and to record their personal reflections. (p.345).

Mok (1997) was also concerned about the nature of student writing in a Hong-Kong secondary school. She sought to assist students in learning and using their English in a more engaging fashion. Students had indicated a desire for greater involvement in planning, organising and running learning activities. Through an English Language Enrichment Program student input was strongly encouraged and led to greater student involvement, such that the young people involved were able to organise features of their learning and encourage fellow students to participate. As Cook-Sather (2011, p.41) has observed, "sometimes an approach taken to meet one pedagogical goal ends up addressing another". The students reported to their teachers that the process enhanced their writing and general engagement with English studies. Mok concluded:

> Student empowerment is possible only through active involvement in their learning. One of the best ways to empower students is to get them organised and to allow them to make their own decisions. Students know their learning needs and problems, and therefore they are in the best position to tell the school what to learn and how to learn it. Indeed, it is students' democratic right to get involve in decisions that affect their learning. In the traditional style of 'boss-management' in schools, the administration and the teachers are the boss (p. 318)

The outcomes of this project pre-figured what came later in terms of the kind of student voice research that has been advocated by Fielding and Rudduck, among others.

Meyer & Etheridge (1999) similarly took a student centred approach to addressing a "drill and kill" (p. 327) method for teaching Spanish in a Memphis classroom, following Mortimer Adler's Paideia Philosophy (Adler, 1982). Paideia philosophy is founded on the notion that students are more capable of learning at a higher level than their teachers often expect of them. Adler sees that every young person is capable of ongoing growth in mental, moral and spiritual domains; that they can become responsible citizens capable of earning a living; and can meaningfully contribute to society (Adler, p. 16). Essentially, the means of teaching Spanish was re-negotiated with students who signaled their levels of interest and engagement. Student decisions were documented through journal entries and classroom meetings. They also assisted in designing the assessment. Increasingly they became confident about introducing new learning methods into their classrooms, for example, designing cities, labelling streets and buildings in Spanish. Meyer & Etheridge claimed that when the young people had a greater say and investment in their learning they took on "a huge responsibility" and that this is part of the "growing process to become adults" (p. 343). The structures and processes employed in this study provided opportunities for

the young people involved to have a voice in their learning, which in turn fed into the research enterprise. One cannot help but wonder how such innovations would fare today in the United States with its agenda of national testing and curriculum restrictions.

Increasingly, in these studies we see the development of partnerships between children and young people and those who are charged with the responsibility of their education. For example, Kusch, Pan, Bohm & Stein (1999) examined the partnership between primary aged children and their teachers to evaluate the computer generated courseware to which they were being subjected. Nearly two decades on with the sophistication of digital technologies used in classrooms today (see Hunter, 2015 for the notion of 'high possibility classrooms') the idea of courseware as little more than a strategy for drill and practice is difficult to imagine. Often the software was stultifying and limiting. By having a dialogue with students, who were the end users, it was possible to identify both the shortcomings of the applications and ways in which they might be more creatively adopted. Through the partnerships students learned evaluation skills and ways in which to think critically and imaginatively about the tools that are provided to them for their learning.

Cook-Sather's work (2009) is of particular note in relation to processes leading to the formation of partnerships between learners and their teachers. For a number of years in the "Teaching and Learning Together" project, secondary school students have been invited to become teacher educators within an undergraduate teacher education program. They have been engaged in mutual conversations about schooling that contributes to the understanding of the tertiary students while at the same time enhancing the school students' understanding of teachers' perspectives, roles and responsibilities. Building on this program, Cook-Sather writes of a project wherein the tertiary teacher-education students become, in turn, consultants to the faculty as "dialogue partners, as co-conceptualisers and co-constructors of educational experience and revision" (2011, p.44). She demonstrated how, layer by layer, communication between students and the faculty has been built and strengthened.

Central to these examples of process is the matter of dialogue. Over many years of scholarship Jurgen Habermas has argued for dialogue as a source of change; that is a form of dialogue that overcomes the many asymmetries of power so persistent in our contemporary society. If, as he argues in relation to social justice, "the addressees of law should understand themselves as the authors of law" leading to a self directing society (2003, p. 87), then it is also possible to posit that the 'addressees' of education should also understand themselves as the authors of education, in considering possibilities for reform and change.

Issues of Ownership: Owning the learning, owning the research
The studies discussed above demonstrate the ways in which the young people involved were taking greater responsibility for their learning. It might be argued that they were beginning to 'own' their learning. But this notion is not unproblematic. Reflecting upon who owns the learning and who owns the research brings us to issues of commodification. Is learning to be 'owned'? Is research to be 'owned'? Will a proud tradition of cooperation and mutualism be undermined when the discourses of 'ownership' come to dominate the discussion of participative research with children and young people? When who 'owns' the intellectual property becomes a concern.

This is precisely the dilemma that is tackled by Mill and Morris (2000) in their exploration of a collaborative action research project undertaken with themselves as post-graduate nursing students where they addressed what they named as "the ambivalence of ownership in relation to the research process" (p. 141). They pondered upon whether they and their work were being colonised by the academics in relation to competing philosophies of practice and their consequences for reform. Had this been the case then the voice of the post-graduate nursing students would have been, at best masked, at worst silenced, by the more academically powerful faculty members. As it was, through sustained discussion and involvement they were enabled to explore the ethical implications of action research, relationships between theory and practice and between participants, and the ways in which these relationships impacted upon their own identities as researchers. Although they did not return fully to matters of 'ownership' it was clear that the writers perceived that their ambivalence had been resolved.

In analysing this difficult matter of 'ownership' it is worth pausing to consider what Hadfield & Haw, in their theoretical resource of issue 9 (3) 2001 have characterised as a simple typology of 'voice' itself; authoritative voice; critical voice; and, therapeutic voice alongside a range of assumptions that each one carries. For example how does one examine the belief that young people are best placed to speak to the experiences of the young; that they can tell professionals about their experiences in ways that are meaningful and constructive; that professionals may not be well positioned to even be able to meet and hear from them; and, that change will actually occur? Clearly, these are all issues of 'ownership'. In summary, all too often it is the case that while children and young people may be consulted they are not seen to have the kind of stake in the research that those in the professional field have and own:

> The bigger issue in practice was not the lack of expertise of the young
> people but the unwillingness of professionals to listen to them, particularly
> when they were being critical. This is a particularly crucial consideration for
> a research approach committed to inclusiveness and working 'with' and not
> 'on'. It raises questions about how we work with young people who are often
> the targets of research around pupil outcomes, achievement and
> performance p. 49.

Ownership is also raised, in the student voice literature, with regard to increasing attention being paid to what Warwick (2008) has named as 'apt citizenship'. He notes that in the UK and in a number of other international jurisdictions citizenship education has become an essential element in the education of children and young people where they are expected to 'own', in part, the problems and challenges faced by today's citizens. Following a complex consultation process, marred in some cases by the lack of cooperation of participating schools, Warwick was able to hear the views of over four hundred young people. Students were well able to identify areas of concern to them on both a global and local level and from whence their knowledge came. This study, while acknowledging that young people could identify the challenges that surrounded them, found that they felt little confidence in their capacity to effect the kinds of changes that are required. In only a few cases could students see themselves as a "source of hope" or an "agent of change" (p.329). It was argued that the consultations gave them opportunity to express their concerns, but that they are "unclear about the limitations and bias of their perspectives" (p. 330). We are reminded of what we noted earlier in relation to the arguments put by McMurray and

Niens (2012) when they raised issues of an engaged citizenship and the need for the authentic voice of young people.

In some ways we can regard the treating of 'ownership' as a core issue when it comes to matters of the voices of children and young people as participants in various studies. In the same issue of *EARJ* in which Warwick's piece is published, Eilertsen, Gustafson & Salo (2008) point out that too often the micro-politics of the school are ignored as researchers build their case. They suggest that researchers are 'micro-politically illiterate' (p. 295). Interestingly, although promoting the cause of action research, the article implies that the researchers are ones based exclusively in a tertiary institution. It may be that where academics are working in concert with practitioners as advocated by Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell, Mockler, Ronnerman & Ponte (2013) then the micro-politics of the school may be better apprehended. Nonetheless, while not focusing specifically upon the matter of student voice Eilersen et al alert us to "the continuing struggle for control, power and influence. These struggles often become most obvious between head-teachers and teachers, or between different teacher subcultures" (p. 300). If this is the case in a research context located in schools, how much more problematic is the matter when we build the students themselves as participants into the mix.

This is precisely the issue that is taken up by Jones & Stanley (2008) when they point to the balancing act required when action researchers wish to give voice to those who may be vulnerable, marginalized and disenfranchised. University based human research ethics committees take little cognizance of the ways in which children and young people can participate in, let alone have ownership of, inquiry practices that impact upon them and their lives. Indeed, when Hopkins (2008) consulted such students on their perspectives regarding work-related learning, that is, learning through work; learning about work; and, learning for work, she found that with a total of 50 students from Years 10 and 11 (aged 15 and 16) it was possible to identify a number of factors that are critical to such learning both as levers and as barriers. She concluded:

> It follows, then, that if research is to create new knowledge then we must look at a partnership of educationalists and students. It is time to break away from traditional patterns of both educational provision and thinking. For real education reform, now is the time not only to *hear* the student voice, but to *listen* to it. (p. 218, our emphasis)

And, furthermore, we would add, *act* upon it.

Moving forward: New Articulations and Iterations of Student Voice
In this penultimate section of the review we turn to four recent articles published in *EARJ*. These articles represent the ways in which the discussion has developed beyond these many examples where, in the main, children and young people have had a voice in terms of 'being consulted'. They demonstrate young people exhibiting greater agency as participants that take them beyond guardianship and legitimacy and towards what Fielding (2007) has characterized as sites of "everyday democracy; that is, educational sites of democratic living" (p. 542), and further articulated by Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2015).

Modes of engagement
Candace Lind's (2007) article was cited earlier as a signature piece in the 2007 special edition of *EARJ*. In a second project (Lind 2013), a fresh high school

university partnership was formed in the same alternative school that provided a democratic learning environment where students were involved in school policy setting and practised authentic decision making. Lind acknowledges that in many cases little advancement has been made in terms of capacity building among young people as participants in action research projects. Therefore, she and her colleagues decided to look closely at issues surrounding capacity building in the context of an alternative school. In this research design "the principal investigator becomes a facilitator assisting the participants in developing and conducting their own research so the research is co-owned" (p. 453). The partnership was to be based on trust through honesty, genuineness, consistency, reliability, demonstrated caring, inclusion of self as person and the inclusive involvement of all collaborators as a means of building integrity. The study built upon the learning arising from that which had been undertaken in the earlier investigation, recruiting new participants by word of mouth, announcements and invitations. Working over two school years the research team, inclusive of students, worked on data collection and data analysis with Lind herself taking responsibility to examine all transcripts for any references that might have breached confidentiality. Importantly, students assisted in the dissemination of the results to the community beyond the school. In comparing this study with the earlier one it is possible to see the evolution of a research orientation that accords with the higher rungs of Hart's 'ladder of participation' (1992), from what Hart might regard as 'tokenism' (wherein children are asked to provide their voice without shaping the content or means of communication) to 'shared decisions' between children and adults.

Lind (2013) was careful in her consideration of issues around confidentiality; this too was a matter attended to by Balakrishnan & Cornforth (2013) who perceived how essential it was to develop 'working agreements' in the context of participatory action research being conducted in a Malaysian setting. The conditions were particularly sensitive as the matters to be investigated were to do with moral problems being experienced by the young people. The study sought to investigate ways in which moral education could be rendered more relevant to students by identifying with the students the kinds of moral dilemmas they faced. Balakrishnan and Cornforth identified four ethical issues that required attention, doing no harm, consent and the aforementioned confidentiality of the data. Drawing extensively on the work of Khanlou & Peter (2005) they perceived that in order to address these issues an ethic of care was required for them to attend to the needs of the 22 students recruited from four schools to take part in the study. Since they were to keep two journals, one related to conflict resolution, the other to personal moral dilemmas it was clear that the participants would be exposed in ways to which they were unaccustomed. As well as eliciting informed consent from their parents the students also collectively contributed to the development of a working agreements, depending upon the school that they attended, agreements to which they would themselves consent. In their reflections upon the working agreement the student participants saw that it provided them with a guiding document, enabling the ongoing conversations to be conducted in a climate of personal safety.

In their summation of the effectiveness of working agreements Balakhishnan and Cornforth make the following claims:
• Working agreements take the culture of localized settings into account;

- Working agreements allow power to be dispersed more respectfully and evenly through the group; and
- Working agreements sets the scene for a more collaborative, procedural, participatory form of moral citizenship. (pp. 596 – 597)

For those working on research projects that involves authentic participation by children and young people the notion of working agreements such as these are not only a template for others to follow, but provide a scaffold that can be appropriately designed for a variety of settings with their own complexities and challenges.

An evolution that we are now witnessing is action research that is youth led. In Karen Goodnough's (2014) reported case study, for example, the young participants developed their own research questions related to the impact of smoking on school grounds and the ways to make the school environment safe and healthy for all students. Adults, teachers and the academic partner acted as mentors, rather than as research leaders, with all participants working towards shared goals. In developing their focus the students who formed the research group decided to expand the consultation by surveying the whole student body regarding concerns that they held about ways in which the school might be 'made better' for them (p. 378). Goodnough claims that the processes that were adopted allowed the participants to see themselves as members of a community of practice whose intention was to improve the health and wellbeing of young people and adults alike.

Clearly, then, participatory action research involving children and young people can have a range of impacts. With its emphasis upon educational action research the *EARJ* has tended to be a magnet for those who wish to publish accounts of the valuing and privileging of student voice in school and university settings. It would be remiss to not acknowledge the ways in which the various studies have not only affected learning, relationships and behaviours but also the pedagogical practices of teachers. In a recent study, Niemi, Kumpulainen & Lipponen (2014) examined ways in which students' documentation through a variety of media could inform teachers regarding their pedagogical practices. Finnish education has become a beacon for those who are interested in a more child-centred and liberatory form of education and has drawn the attention of the education community around the world (Sahlberg, 2011). Among the documentation practices observed in their study Niemi, Kumpulainen and Lipponen employed the use of digital cameras as a means whereby students could record the pedagogical practices of their teachers. The study covered two phases, the second of which also involved student teachers undertaking a practicum experience. The school students created narratives that acted to explicate their photographs. These in turn, were examined by the teacher and the student teachers as a means of making sense of the pedagogical practices operative in the classroom and the importance accorded to them by the children. The paper reported that, in the main, the school students took pictures of those practices about which they had positive feelings. Given that these were to be examined by the adults it is not unexpected that they have been reluctant to observe less positive practices, or even that they found it difficult to identify visual representations of them. What we need to take away from this study is the sense that armed with tools such as digital cameras young people can readily document their teacher's practices and comment upon them.

Although we make the claim that participatory action research involving children and young people is moving on we also would argue that, in the main, the effort continues to be a transactional rather than transformational one. Of course, the contexts are critical here. In many countries the notion of giving children and young people a meaningful voice regarding the conditions under which they learn is an anathema to the ways in which classroom practice is undertaken. Furthermore teachers are increasingly burdened with legislative requirements and so-called quality frameworks that act to hamper and distract them from the kind of student-centred practices that might be of a transformational kind.

Conclusion

In this review of *EARJ* articles that highlight aspects of student voice over a number of years we can argue that the journal has made an extraordinary contribution to the development of professional knowledge that is mediated through the process of consultation with children and young people. Articles have ranged over contexts and processes. Each one has contributed to the accumulation of our knowledge of the ways in which students can inform practice when they are honoured and respected for the knowledge that they have as those experiencing teachers' work.

Fourteen years ago Crane (2001) indicated in her portrayal of the *Students as Researchers* project at Sharnbrook Upper School and Community College in UK:

> Not only can the students come to school to learn; but they can and indeed must be an integral part of the school's own learning. Schools cannot learn how to become better places for learning without asking the students. (p.54).

In our introduction we expressed some caution about the current conditions of both academics' and teachers' work as it is recognized in publications of one kind or another. As Furlong (2013) has argued, universities are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial, shaped by outside forces, in the main, government policies. The modern enterprise university is not necessarily one that will encourage research that engages with the field of practice, let alone with children and young people. Thus it is critical that *EARJ* continues to publish a range of articles that fully recognize the capacity of children and young people to be participative in research projects that become a platform for the learning of academics, field based practitioners and the community at large.

Not only that, but it is essential that in publishing a range of such articles there is a commitment to attend carefully to the acoustics of 'voice', from muted to clarion. For those beginning a journey of encounters with student voice, as data sources, the challenges of power and authority, processes for developing partnerships and matters of ownership will necessarily pose more questions than solutions. At the same time, those who are well advanced as partners and co-researchers in practice will still find much to exercise their critical faculties as they seek to unpick the many and challenging contradictions that they will encounter as they learn to be in a space where a multiplicity of voices prevail. All will have to deal with the discontinuities and inconsistencies as multiple voices seek to be heard across what has previously been the 'no man's land' between those who teach and those who learn.

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