Welcome

This edition of Research eLert explores the concept of ‘student voice’ and how it has developed from the 1980s to the present.

In the modern Victorian context, the notion of student voice helps meet the objectives of developing the interdisciplinary skills vital for a curriculum framed by the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. It also ensures that the needs of individual students guide the design of personalised learning plans.

I trust that you will find this report a useful resource for generating discussion in your school on innovative ways of capturing the authentic student voice as a means of engaging students, enhancing their educational experiences and improving pedagogical practice. Hard copies of the Student Voice paper will be provided to all Victorian schools.

We are keen to receive your ideas and contributions and encourage you to continue to provide feedback to: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Dr Dahle Suggett
Deputy Secretary
Office of Learning and Teaching

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Feature Article

**Student Voice: a historical perspective and new directions**

This report examines local and international literature on the concept of ‘student voice’ and explores the links between student voice and student learning and engagement. Part 1 examines student voice from a historical perspective and summarises the findings of Australian and international research. Part 2 is a review of how Australian jurisdictions are promoting student voice and includes a range of initiatives within the Victorian education system that are contributing to improved teaching and learning, teacher-student relationships and productive learning experiences.

*Department of Education 2007*

Related Research

Early Childhood

**Young children enacting governance: Child's play?**

In the many forms of governance imposed by adults on children, are children passive, interacting with adults, or are they active agents in their own and other children’s regulation? This study is concerned with the process of governance, and with young children enacting governance in their everyday lives. The paper reports on a number of strategies that children utilise when enacting governance ‘within their peer cultures in the classroom’. There is a specific focus on the construction of adult and child-formulated rules and social orders of the classroom, which are relied upon by children in order to govern their peers’ interactions.


**Is it possible to access the ‘voice’ of pre-school children? Results of a research project in a pre-school setting**

‘The notion of consultation is intrinsically linked with notions of the rights of the child.’ So contend researchers in this UK report on the feasibility of consulting with very young children to enable their voices to be heard and considered in the planning of pre-school provision. In a case study of six four-year-olds in a nursery setting, the researchers sought the children’s opinions on their favourite areas of nursery life and looked at how these preferences were understood by parents and teachers, resulting in a surprising comparison of perspectives. The report discusses the need for authenticity in adult-child dialogue and factors that may facilitate reliable consultation with very young children.


*For further information contact the Office of Learning and Teaching at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>
Schools (primary & secondary)

‘As I got to learn it got fun’: children’s reflections on their first year at school

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in researching children’s voices concerning a range of issues. This paper reports on a strategy used by the Starting School Research Project to involve children as research partners in conversations regarding starting school. Researchers asked children from three schools in New South Wales to reflect on how they thought they had changed over their first year of school by comparing what they were like when they commenced school to what they were like at the completion of their school year. The children were encouraged to draw representations of themselves (reflective drawings) at each of these times including comments. The paper also presented a number of implications for research practice as a result of their study and research findings.


Giving children a voice: what next? A study from one primary school

This study received joint first prize from the Scottish Council for Research in Education. The research project explored the issues involved in giving primary school children a voice in a primary school. The aim of the study was to find out what happens when primary school students are given the opportunity to be decision-makers and influence decisions as legitimate contributors. The researcher uses Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation as a model to explore the levels of involvement in decision-making.

http://www.scre.ac.uk/spotlight/spotlight65.html

Every child needs a hero: a report tracking Australian children’s concerns and attitudes about childhood

What are the concerns, perceptions and attitudes of children aged between 10 and 17 years in contemporary Australian society? The researchers sought the ‘voices’ of 986 children on a range of issues, with the critical findings grouped into various discussion points including: kids are growing up faster these days; the world is an uncertain place for many children; children’s uncertainty about the future makes them take on adult worries; mums and dads are children’s heroes and; children and young people have great confidence in authority figures.


Do children’s perceptions of themselves, their teachers, and school accord with teachers’ ratings of their adjustment to school?

Is there a disparity between children’s perceptions of themselves, their teachers, and school compared with teachers’ ratings of children’s adjustment to school? In this paper, Harrison investigates child and teacher reports of school adjustment, with particular attention focused on the match (and/or mismatch) between children’s perceptions of themselves and their feelings about school, and the classroom teachers’ ratings. Furthermore, Harrison considers the effects of
the child’s and teacher’s gender and the child’s age of starting school. Does the child’s gender impact on the child’s perceptions? Are there gender differences in the teachers’ evaluation ratings of the child’s school adjustment? What are the effects of age differences? The sample of students was comprised of children attending schools in New South Wales.


Methodological insights from children's accounts of everyday practices in school

What can children teach us? Can we, as adults, conceptualise children as competent research informants and participants rather than merely imposing our worldview and perspectives? This paper examines children’s (aged 7-12) own accounts of their everyday practices in two Brisbane primary schools. The researchers explore children’s accounts of their everyday lives, how they feel about making their own decisions or having decisions made on their behalf, and whether there are benefits to children in having some form of adult regulation.


Opening the floodgates: giving students a voice in school reform

This paper explores how high schools can improve student engagement and outcomes and shares the experiences of two schools in the USA, Seacrest High and Whitman High School, who have given students a voice in school reform. The complexities and challenges, as well as the impact and benefits of involving students in the process of school reform and improvement, of giving students a voice are explored. The benefits of these experiences, some of which are detailed, are not merely experienced by students but by teachers and the community.

http://www.wwwords.co.uk/pdf/viewpdf.asp?url=forum&vol=43&issue=2&year=2001&article=Forum_43_2_Cor eContent&id=203.12.60.120

Why pupil voice?

Why pupil voice? This paper offers six compelling reasons as to why student involvement and student voice strategies make sense. It outlines four ways in which we, as educators, can get closer to the learner and outlines five dimensions to pupil involvement. The author concludes with four ‘personal aspirations for 21st century achievement’ in schools.


Listening to parents and students

Why have the voices of students and parents been historically and predominately excluded from educational research that investigates schooling and school reform? What are the implications for such exclusion and what are the benefits of inclusion for educational research? This study elaborates on the Changing Schools, Changing Times project which endeavours to incorporate the voices of students and parents in educational research. The authors contend that students’
and parents’ voices can make a contribution to improving learning and teaching and to school reform.


**The power of pupil perspectives in evidence-based practice: the case of gender and underachievement**

This paper examines the possibility of utilising student views as a crucial source of evidence for improving curriculum, pedagogy and student achievement. This is discussed through the findings of the study, Project JUDE. A central concern of the project was to ensure that students’ voices were heard. The paper’s focus is on the evidence produced from students’ perspectives in three key areas: the curriculum; the students’ preferred teaching and learning styles; and the differences in achievement and/or behaviour of boys and girls. The paper also focuses on the gendered processes which are ‘integral to cultures of learning in pedagogy and enacted curricula’, the differences between teachers’ and students’ perceptions in the three key areas, and how teachers use and/or fail to use student voice to inform school improvement.


For further information contact the Office of Learning and Teaching at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

‘I get bored when we don't have the opportunity to say our opinion’: learning about teaching from students

The interest in student voice is not merely a topic shared by English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon countries. This paper focuses on engaging secondary school students in Greece and focuses on pedagogy that captures and sustains students’ interest in archaeology and history. Secondary school students (aged 12 to 14) from different parts of Greece were interviewed for this study which draws on student feedback to explore how teaching practices could be improved.

*Mitsoni, F. 2006, ‘I get bored when we don't have the opportunity to say our opinion’: learning about teaching from students’, Educational Review, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 159-170.*

For further information contact the Office of Learning and Teaching at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

**A typology of student voice in school reform**

What is student voice and how has it been discussed in the school reform literature? Are there different types of student voice? This paper discusses with the question of ownership: ‘Who gets to define what the problems of a school are, and who gets to try to improve them?’ Three concepts of student voice are outlined in the research and examined.


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**Unpopular voices - listening to pupils at risk**

Why should student voices be heard? Should unpopular voices be listened to? How do we listen to unpopular voices? What are we attempting to achieve when we are asking students ‘at risk’ to speak? This paper seeks to explore and address these questions. The paper includes a section on increasing participation, utilising five categories of increased participation, and proposes scenarios in which students ‘at risk’ might be offered opportunities to speak.
Participatory research in schools

What is participatory research with and by students? What are some considerations regarding this research methodology? This paper provides an overview of participatory research undertaken with and by young people. It explores the use of participatory research in schools, conducted by adult researchers (adult-led) and also young researchers (children-led). The paper also outlines participatory research methods, provides some examples of participatory research methods and raises a number of key issues relevant to young people as researchers such as ethical practice, ownership, and partnerships with adults.

http://www.wwwords.co.uk/pdf/viewpdf.asp?j=forum&vol=43&issue=2&year=2001&article=Forum_43_2_Cor eContent&id=203.12.60.120

Researching with children: children’s perspectives of their place(s) in primary schools

This research project encouraged primary school children (in years 4 and 5) in one Adelaide primary school to share some of their insights into their place(s) by visually recording the place(s) of their own daily school experiences. The children created a set of photographs and artworks of places within their school, and through verbal exchanges the children disclosed understandings of their school by commenting on their photographs and artworks. A number of questions are explored, including: why involve children in research about their schools?; how were the children involved in the research project?; and, what was the children’s role in the research?


Talking about youth participation – where, when and why?

Young people have traditionally been positioned as being incapable of making decisions for themselves, but there are growing moves towards ensuring young people’s voices are heard in a variety of arenas. The authors give examples of initiatives which illustrate the rising trend of young people participating in decision-making, and discuss how ‘participation’ and ‘youth’ are defined. They also explore the many reasons to encourage young people to participate, which might be pragmatic, educational, technical or transformative. The paper also examines a number of models which articulate the degree of participation individuals have in any given project, including Hart’s (1992) Ladder of Participation, Westhorp’s (1987) Continuum, Shier’s (2001) Pathways to Participation and Rocha’s (1997) Ladder of Empowerment.

http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/how02535.htm

Student learning through Australian school libraries. Part 1: a statistical analysis of student perceptions

Teacher–librarians have always known that effective school libraries can make a difference to student learning outcomes. Now, an increasing number of teacher-librarians throughout Australia use evidence-based methods to highlight the significant impact of their work in schools. In
response to a need for local research, a recently conducted project, Student learning through Australian school libraries, 2004-05, replicated an earlier US study designed to examine ‘student learning through effective school libraries’, specifically from the perspective of students. The ‘student voice’ approach was adopted by the Australian study in which the views of Years 5-12 students, from 63 Queensland and Victorian government schools, were sought on the role of the school library in supporting student learning. Further analysis and reporting will be undertaken using data generated by this study.

http://www.slav.schools.net.au/synergy/vol3num2/vol3num2.htm

**Pupil participation and pupil perspective: ‘carving a new order of experience’**

This paper contends that to exclude young people from the consultative process fails to acknowledge their capacity to reflect on issues which affect their lives. Managing school improvement means tuning in to students’ views about what they find challenging or limiting and how regimes and relationships affect their sense of belonging, both as individual learners and as members of the school community. This paper also describes how students see school as a holistic experience. While it is difficult to gain their views on ‘the curriculum’, students have a lot to say about the conditions of learning.


For further information contact the Office of Learning and Teaching at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

**Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning Project, UK**

For students to be more engaged with learning, their active participation in democratic processes needs to result in tangible transformation in teaching and learning practices. This project in the UK found that if students were consulted and listened to, they felt a greater sense of belonging and inclusion, resulting in a strong belief in their ability to contribute to improving the school’s capacity as a learning organisation. Teachers gained a deeper insight into the capabilities of their students and how to build more positive and collaborative relationships which in turn influenced their practice.

Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning Project, UK.
http://www.consultingpupils.co.uk

**The transformative potential of student voice: confronting the power issues**

Is research on student voice and its development in schools a passing fashion or the foundation for a new order? This paper suggests that it is not enough to teach about democracy, it has to be enacted daily in the learning environment. And where practices exist in schools which divide students or value some students above others, consultation processes can reflect these practices but not challenge them. Students should not be feared as ‘revolutionaries’ wanting to undermine the system; they do want to understand why things are done as they are and they do want to have some choice about how and what they learn.

http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002544.doc
**Pupil voice: comfortable and uncomfortable learnings for teachers**

Many teachers are starting to consult their pupils to help them find ways of improving the teaching and learning that goes on in their own classrooms. This study explored the experiences of six teachers and their pupils. The teachers felt that many of their pupils’ ideas were sensible, practical and educationally desirable. However, it is the students who are most successful in school learning who are the most articulate about what helps them to learn. Teachers most need to hear from those whom it will be most difficult to consult. This paper contends that significant innovation in classroom teaching will be more effective if the school has facilitating support structures in place.


http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/themes/pupil_voice/comfortable/

**Pupils, the forgotten partners in education action zones**

The UK Government established the first Education Action Zones (EAZs) in 1997 to raise standards of behaviour and academic attainment in areas of significant disadvantage. The authors of this report maintain that if schools in EAZs are going to make real progress towards these goals then they need to start consulting students. The paper explores how moving towards more democratic forms of relationships encourages student participation and enables their voices to be heard. The researchers set out to explore the views of students on the factors which they thought helped or hindered their learning and found the majority of pupils responded positively to being consulted about their learning environment.


http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/themes/pupil_voice/educationactionzones/

**Post-compulsory**

**Voices and choices: how education influences the career choices of young disabled people**

This paper reports on a three year research project (work in progress) funded by the European Social Fund regarding the educational experiences of a group of young disabled students residing in the UK, who are still in full-time mainstream education and/or special education. One of the objectives of the research project was to give a ‘voice’ to young disabled people. The researcher presents some of the personal accounts or stories of these young people’s perceptions of how their educational environment influenced their personal aspirations for future careers and post-school choices. A number of themes surfaced from interviews with these young disabled people, and are summarised in four themes.


For further information contact the Office of Learning and Teaching at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

**Further Reading**

Click on hyperlink below to find comprehensive resources comprising policy documents and local and international research reports related to this project.

Further reading
The Knowledge Bank Connection

The following case studies have been selected from a broad range of work being undertaken in Victorian schools.

Copperfield College Kings Park Campus

Student led interviews for assessment (Exemplary)

Staff at Copperfield College addressed weaknesses in assessment and reporting by introducing student-led presentations. Students were able to present and reflect on their learning for a real purpose and to a real audience. Although time consuming, commitment by teachers, students and parents made the process a success.

Glen Katherine Primary School

Child centred assessment and reporting strategies (Exemplary)

When a parent survey showed that assessment and reporting techniques were not well-received by parents, Glen Katherine Primary comprehensively revised their strategies to make them more child-centred. Students now write their own goals, complete common assessment tasks, reflect on learning and participate in three way conferences.

Kambrya College

Creating global thinkers - Kambrya College's Global Journey (Exemplary)

Focusing on 'how to learn', Global Journey aims to equip each student for a journey, teaching them how to set goals; meet real world challenges, think critically and function within a community.

Mordialloc College

Managed individual pathways for students (MIPs) (Exemplary)

To encourage students to take ownership of their education, Mordialloc College introduced the MIPs program. Organised around home group sessions, students work in mixed age groups and have the same staff member until they reach Year 12. The program has strengthened the school community, with students from all levels interacting.

The Patch Primary School

Philosophy Prep-6 (Exemplary)

Margaret Hallinan wants to provide students with the opportunity to practise their thinking and question their values; encourage engagement, respect for the opinions of others and cooperation; provide the opportunity for self-expression; allow students to be inquirers, through the community of inquiry; and for students to be able to support their thinking with reasons.

For more case studies visit the Knowledge Bank site at:


Useful Links

Pupil Voice, The University of Nottingham, UK
http://www.pupil-voice.org.uk/

SoundOut, CommonAction
http://www.soundout.org/

SoundOut Student Voice Bibliography
http://www.soundout.org/bibliography.html
Student Voice, NSW Department of Education and Training, Australia

Specialist Schools and Academies Trust’s–International Networking for Educational Transformation (SST–iNet)
http://www.sst-inet.net/

English Secondary Students Association (ESSA), UK
http://www.studentvoice.co.uk/default.asp

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), USA
http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/scc/studentvoices/index.html

Every Child Matters: Change for Children - Personalised learning, Department for Education and Skills, UK
http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/personalisedlearning/

14-19 Gateway: Transforming the education system for 14-19 Year olds, Department for Education and Skills, UK
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/

New Horizons: Student voice in transforming education
http://www.newhorizons.org/voices/front_voices.html

Teachernet - The Voice of Youth, Department for Education and Skills, UK

Teachernet: Youth Matters, Department for Education and Skills, UK
http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/briefing/currentstrategy/youthgreenpaper/

The Standards Site – Pupil voice, Department for Education and Skills, UK
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/themes/pupil_voice/

The Standards Site – Pupil voice digest, Department for Education and Skills, UK
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/themes/pupil_voice/?digest=all

Department of Education and Skills – Listening to Learn, UK
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn/

Education|Evolving, Student Voices (Student Opinions for a Change)
http://www.educationevolving.org/studentvoices

Upcoming Events

ICT in Education Victoria (ICTEV): ‘Leadership and ICT: Addressing the challenges of Generation Y’
Workshops
April - October 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

ACER: ‘Leading lights of learning: Views of assessment, learning and mind’
26 April 2007
Brisbane, Queensland

education.au: ‘Challenging how knowledge is created’
27 April 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://educationau.edu.au/jahia/Jahia/challenging
Modern Language Teachers Association of Victoria (MLTAV) Annual Conference: ‘VELS and so much more’
27 April 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://www.mltav.asn.au/

The National Centre for Science, ICT and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR): ‘Narrowing the Gap: Addressing Educational Disadvantage’
26-28 April 2007
The University of New England
Armidale, New South Wales
http://www.simerr.une.edu.au/

iNET Australia 2007 National Conference: ‘Essential Questions for Schools and Communities’
29 April–1 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

Association for Qualitative Research (AQR) Workshop: ‘The Literature Review and Beyond: using literature effectively’
29 April 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://www.latrobe.edu.au/aqr

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria: National Youth Affairs Conference: ‘Are we there yet?’
1-2 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

Department of Education (Victoria), Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, Independent Schools Association Victoria: ‘Building positive school communities – values, vision and community perspectives’
2 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://valuesconf.edublogs.org

3-4 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

Education Foundation: ‘Back to School Day’
8 May (Vic & Tas)
17 May (NSW, ACT, NT, WA & SA)
29 May (Qld)

Hawker Brownlow Education: ‘Teachers at work: 4th annual thinking & learning conference’
8-10 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

Queensland Studies Authority: ‘Bright beginnings, bright futures: snapshots of capable children’
11-12 May 2007
Brisbane, Queensland

La Trobe University & RMIT University: ‘Doing it better: a forum on learning disabilities in education’
14-15 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://www.latrobe.edu.au/equity/LDforum
iNet student-only online conferences 2006-2007
Overarching theme: ‘What does it mean to be a global citizen?’
14-20 May 2007 Global peace. How can we bring peace to our planet?

Middle Years of Schooling Association: ‘Middle Schooling: Reaching new heights, building our future’
17-19 May 2007
Gold Coast, Queensland
http://www.mysa2007.com/

ICT in Education Victoria (ICTEV) 2007 State Conference: ‘Digital Discussion’
19 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

Centre for Youth Literacy: ‘Reading Matters Conference 2007’
24-26 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

Centre for Strategic Education (CSE, formerly IARTV): ‘Yapaneyepuk Coming Together’ Indigenous Education Conference
27-28 May 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://www.cse.edu.au

iNet Series 3 online conferences for educators 2006-2007: ‘Are we meeting the needs of the learner?’
The 21st century educator: How do we prepare educators for a new role in the 21st century?
4-12 June 2007

Australian Association for Research in Education: 2007 Focus Conference: ‘Education, innovation & research: strategies for capacity building’
13-14 June 2007
Canberra, ACT

Education Expo 2007
23-24 June 2007
Sydney, New South Wales
http://www.edexpo.info

Research eLert Feedback
Do you have or know of a research paper that you think would be worth considering for inclusion in Research eLert?

- Are you currently undertaking education research that you would like to share with our readers?
- Is there a particular topic or theme you would like Research eLert to cover?
- Do you have information on new publications, upcoming events or interesting websites that would be of interest to education researchers and practitioners?
- Would you like to provide feedback – including suggestions to improve Research eLert?

If you answered yes to any of the above – then we’d love to hear from you. Please forward your information, suggestions or comments to: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.
Reflections & Action

Below are some questions to assist in reflective practice and to explore future actions.

- How can I promote reading and discussion of the paper on student voice and the related research in my workplace?
- What are we currently doing that supports student voice?
- What new knowledge have I gained in the area of student voice? How can this learning be used to inform and support school/organisational transformation?
- What research information would I like to share with others? How will I do this?

Next Edition

The twelfth edition of Research eLert will be available later in Term 2, 2007. It will explore the concept of personalised learning identified in local and international research and consider the challenges for schools and the implications for education systems in adopting personalised learning practices. The newsletter will highlight examples of emerging practice in personalised learning.

We are keen to include information on how schools and other learning organisations are using research to inform and guide their practice and would like to include some of this work in the future issues of Research eLert. If you are interested, please contact the Research and Development Branch at: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

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