



Repositioning student voice in school: The process of 'Becoming Co-operative'

Deborah Ralls

How to cite this article:

Ralls, D. (2016). Repositioning student voice in school: The process of 'Becoming Co-operative'. *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, 49(2), 21-29.

Repositioning Student Voice in School: The Process of ‘Becoming Co-operative’

Deborah Ralls

It is widely acknowledged that schools need to take account of student voice, yet in an education landscape where notions of “voice” are increasingly defined by individualistic notions of consumer satisfaction, student voice can all too often take the form of “you said, we did” — with “we” meaning the teaching staff and the school senior leadership team. This article stems from a recent case study in an English co-operative school that brings to the surface what happens when a school attempts to do things differently — as a direct result of its decision to become a co-operative school. The study draws on data collected from observations, staff interviews and student focus groups to explore differing perceptions of what student voice looks like in practice and to identify the spaces of possibility for transformation from passive, individualistic forms of student voice to new imaginaries that promote student voice as agentic and relational. The findings provide an insight into the changes in staff-student relationships and shifts in power and positionality that have occurred as a direct result of becoming a co-operative school, exploring the potential for schools to develop collective ownership of the education process (Facer et al, 2011).

Introduction

This article focuses on findings on student voice that emerged from a wider study exploring approaches to engagement in a co-operative school setting. It argues that understandings of engagement and democracy are fundamental when considering the question, “what is the purpose of student voice?” Policy tends to frame engagement as a series of professionally led interventions, driven by objectives determined by policy makers. Such understandings of engagement are top-down and posit a particular framing of student voice: “you said, we did”. This research seeks an alternative approach to student voice that challenges the widely accepted notion that professionals “do to” students (Dyson and Kerr, 2013) who are characterised by deficits and instead points to the need to *do with* students, who have all sorts of assets to bring to bear as partners in the educational process. However, if student voice is to be agentic and based on notions of reciprocity, schools need to have a different understanding of the purpose of engagement, where engagement is understood as a collective endeavour rather than as a series of individual interactions. Understanding engagement in this way positions voice as part of an ongoing reciprocal dialogue rather than a one-off intervention to be solved by professionals.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that understandings of democracy are highly contested. In seeking to clarify what democracy might look like, authors have made the distinction between *thin* and *thick* forms of democracy (Carr, 2012; Gandin and Apple, 2002; 2012). Carr (2012: 23) characterises thin and thick democracy in terms of:

representative versus participatory democracy, with the former highlighting electoral processes (*thin*) and the latter focusing on critical engagement and social justice (*thick*).

Carr (2012: 24) suggests that this notion of *thin* as opposed to *thick* democracy is helpful in surfacing the tensions that can occur between the “superficial features” (*thin*) that are often associated with democracy and the “fundamental scaffolding” that is required in order to create thicker forms of democracy in practice. Moreover, the process of putting such “scaffolding” into place in schools is complex and multi-faceted, as Levinson and Stevick (2007: 2) explain:

Democracy is not an abstract system that can be dropped into any new context and be expected to function, nor is it a set of institutional arrangements that can be evaluated satisfactorily simply by examining a flowchart in a document. Democracy is rather the product of interaction, the interaction of a system and its institutions with the cultural context and the people who make them real.

The implications are clear; that *thin* democratic systems may be in place but these do not necessarily result in *thicker* democratic relationships and processes of democratic decision making — between a school and its stakeholders — and among the stakeholder groups themselves. The use of a case study in a co-operative school, a school that has made an explicit commitment to engaging its stakeholders more democratically via its adherence to the co-operative values and governance structure, thus provides an appropriate lens through which to consider whether putting the democratic scaffolding in place (co-operative governance structures) offers spaces of possibility for thicker democracy in action and the development of a more agentic, reciprocal form of student voice.

A Relational Perspective

In seeking alternatives to professionally driven approaches to student voice this research draws upon the concept of a relational approach to engagement as espoused by Warren et al (2009). Following Warren et al (2009), this study identifies a unilateral approach as mirroring the professionally-driven model of engagement, emphasising “‘power over’ others, the capacity to get others to do one’s bidding” (Warren et al, 2009: 2213), whereas a *relational* approach, in contrast, is defined as a school and its stakeholders getting things done collectively. Warren et al propose three core elements of a relational approach, elements that can be applied to consider the purpose of student voice in schools and its potential to offer *power to* rather than *power over* young people:

- (1) An emphasis on relationship building among students (and between students and educators).
- (2) A focus on the leadership development of students.
- (3) An effort to bridge the gap in culture and power between students and educators (adapted from Warren et al, 2009: 2210).

This paper uses these three core elements to help surface any shifts in approach to student voice and to illuminate the instances in which these occur; in particular, whether *becoming co-operative* can support a more relational approach to student voice in school.

What is a Co-operative School?

The co-operative schools model has been borne out of a capitalist command economy (Monbiot, 2013) that has resulted in English education policy reforms which have led to the marketisation of state education; a contemporary English educational landscape that houses an unprecedented assortment of alternatives marketed through the rhetoric of *freedom and choice*.

Against this background, co-operative schools have emerged; state schools with an ethos based on the globally shared co-operative values of self-help; self-responsibility; democracy; equality; equity and solidarity. In becoming a co-operative school, schools agree to apply these values throughout the school, in their governance, pedagogy, curriculum and ethos (Woodin, 2015). Parents and carers, staff, students and the local community have direct engagement in the governance of the school through membership, making each co-operative school a community-based mutual organisation. Woodin (2015: 5) explains how co-operative schools emerged as an “unintended consequence” of the marketisation of the English education system, providing some hope that education can be refashioned “along more democratic and community based lines”.

The Research Site and Methodology

Blakemore School [pseudonym] provides the setting for the case study. The school took the decision to convert from a Local Authority state school to become a co-operative Academy in

January 2013. Blakemore School is a larger than average co-educational comprehensive school in a large conurbation in the north of England. Students attending the school come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds from around the conurbation. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Just over half the students have minority ethnic heritage, and a significant proportion of these speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is slightly above the national average.

Drawing on Warren et al's (2009) concept of relational engagement, both staff and students were asked about their engagement experiences, through three separate semi-structured interviews (staff) and two focus groups (students). The school identified staff participants with specific roles and responsibilities linked to student engagement, specifically those staff working on the relaunch of the School Council following the school's conversion to become a co-operative school. Twelve students were selected for the student focus group, based on their engagement in the School Council. Observations of School Council meetings and associated activities were conducted at regular intervals throughout the year so as to observe student voice in action and the findings compared with the accounts given in the staff interview data and student focus groups.

The following section discusses two key findings from the research. The first brings to the surface the democratic spaces of possibility that the co-operative governance model offers for more agentic, relational forms of student voice in schools. The second finding illuminates the potential for shifts in power and positionality between educators and students and the challenges this presents as school tries to move from student voice as "you said, we did" towards more democratic, collective forms of voice and engagement.

Findings

Co-operative governance and democratic spaces of possibility

The study shows how Co-operative school governance offers the potential for democratic spaces of possibility that can support more agentic, relational forms of student voice and student engagement. The re-launch of a democratically elected School Council at Blakemore School has resulted in a far broader range of engagement of young people from different socio-economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in increased levels of school decision-making. This marks a movement away from the previous model, where participation was focused on a small group of students who were selected by the teachers, a group that one teacher referred to as "the usual suspects"; mainly middle class young people from professional households. The members of the co-operative, democratically elected School Council, on the other hand, reflect the constituency of the school population as a whole. Sally, the School Business Manager, explains how the School Council functioned in the past:

It [the Student Council] wasn't very active in the period before September. They met periodically but there wasn't a structured set of meetings. The membership of the Council was kind of historical really and it rolled over year on year. So if you were in the Council in Year 7 you were just on the Council in Year 8 and so on and there wasn't a very clear feedback to the students ... It was kind of the form tutors and Head of Year saying 'you'd be good'.
(Sally, School Business Manager)

It is clear, therefore, that prior to *becoming co-operative*, student voice and engagement operated very much on the school's terms. Teachers, rather than students, had set the parameters for engagement here, by nominating students for the Student Council: "saying 'you'd be good'". It was the teachers who had taken the central role in sorting and selecting students for relative positions of power as members of the School Council (Lipman, 1998), rather than the students themselves. It is important, therefore, to reflect upon the impact

of these different decision-making approaches in school. The introduction of a democratic decision-making process for students themselves had resulted in a far broader range of young people from different socio-economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in increased levels of school decision-making, whilst the previous teacher-led selection process had restricted student voice to “the usual suspects” and resulted in a lack of interest and engagement from other students. In the following part of this section, teachers reflect on the impact of *becoming co-operative* and how changes in organisational and operational structures had initiated a shift away from the previous ‘thinner’, top-down model of democracy towards a ‘thicker’, more dialogic encounter (Fielding, 2001):

I think it [the new co-operative structure] opens up engaging the students in decisions much, much more ... It's given me that push that 'right, OK, we can't be making unilateral decisions, we need to pull the young people in'.

(Michael, Director of Engagement)

Michael's comments suggest that *becoming co-operative* had triggered Blakemore School into making concerted efforts to go beyond mere consultation with young people and instead move towards a more active, dialogic and reciprocal mode of student engagement (Fielding, 2010), a point that is emphasised below by Sally, the School Business Manager. Sally had been responsible for managing the re-launch of the Student Council in line with the co-operative values and explained how the school's conversion to a co-operative academy had changed this aspect of student engagement, leading to the establishment of a democratic election system:

there was no debate then about whether we should do it through a democratic way ... I'm sure it added impetus ... We wanted to make it democratic and you to be voted on ... It was very popular. In Year 7 and Year 8 we had 15 people standing in some form groups ... It did tap into a new group of people ... The democratic purpose and that value that the students themselves personally feel about it is much higher I think, it's much more valued as a role.

(Sally, School Business Manager)

Speaking to the students themselves it was clear that being engaged in a democratic election process had given them what Holland et al (1998) refer to as a “processual understanding of identity and agency”; their accounts show how they see their voice as part of an ongoing and developing relationship, rather than student voice being restricted to a series of one-off interventions or special projects. Lily's description of her ‘engagement journey’ shows how the co-operative school governance structure, and its explicit focus on the democratic election process, provides the framework for different types of collaborative relationships to emerge:

I challenged myself in becoming a Student Council Form Rep – just to see if I could. I got to become a Form Rep, gaining confidence to go on (with Aziz). The first year council meeting they asked who wanted to be on the Whole School Council. Me and Aziz (from my form) decided to make the videos for it — I thought: “I have got this far, why not further?” I made a video with a speech. It was played in the year assembly – it was very embarrassing. Loads of people said I did well, even people I didn't know very well, and that gave me confidence. Ms. told us who had got in [to the Whole School Council]. I was excited to start the first meeting where the Chairs were voted for. I built up a good relationship with people from the Whole School Council, which helped me become Chair. I now attend governors' meetings with Danielle (Vice Chair) – it's a big responsibility but also lots of fun – I really enjoy it.

(Lily, Year 9: Chair of Whole School Council)

In her engagement journey, Lily clearly charts how her confidence and ability to build relationships with a range of different stakeholders develops as a direct result of the various stages of the democratic process linked with the co-operative Student Council initiative. Lily's reflections show how, as she progresses from form representative, to year representative to Chair of the Whole School Council, she gains increasing amounts of power to make student voice count as part of a democratic decision-making process with senior leaders in the school and with school governors. In Lily's description of her engagement journey to become Chair of the Whole School Council, it is evident that engagement with the democratic process of standing for election and being selected by her peers has been empowering, changing who she initially thought she was and who she thought she could become (Apple, 2011).

Whilst Lily's engagement journey places emphasis on the democratic processes involved in being elected to stand for the School Council, and the spaces of possibility this creates, Colin's account of his engagement journey provides an insight into how supportive stakeholder relationships are key in the process of developing relational, agentic forms of student voice:

Year 7: I did not really have a need to put a voice forward. My main focus was to settle in with my new environment.

Years 8 and 9: these two years were important. I started to have an opinion about school [but] I wasn't confident enough to go through with it.

Year 10: In Year 10 a lot of things happened. I put myself forward for the Year 10 Council Form Rep, the Whole School Council and the Senior Leadership Team Rep. I got all the roles that I put myself forward for. A lot of people helped me along the way — form tutors, my Head of Year, friends, parents, mentors.

(Colin, Year 10 Whole School Council. Senior Leadership Team Representative)

Colin's journey illustrates how, over time, supportive relationships with different stakeholders, both inside and outside school, gave him the confidence to stand for election. Colin refers to five different groups of people who had "helped me along the way", conveying the importance of multiple instances of support and encouragement from three different stakeholder groups (students, staff and parents). Lily and Colin's accounts demonstrate the positive impact on young people of engagement with the democratic processes involved in election to the co-operative School Council; processes that encourage an approach to student voice and student leadership that clearly meet the three key requirements of a more relational approach:

(1) An emphasis on relationship building among students (and between students and educators.

(2) A focus on the leadership development of students.

(3) An effort to bridge the gap in culture and power between students and educators (adapted from Warren et al, 2009: 2210).

The findings show that the re-launch of the Student Council — in line with the co-operative values and principles — provides students with the opportunity for more agentic and relational forms of student voice. Post co-operative conversion, students are afforded a more equitable status in terms of governance and stakeholder voice, with greater opportunities to collaborate with different stakeholders (and with those in higher positions of power) than had previously been the case. As a result, students value the School Council, recognising the agentic nature of student voice, and, unsurprisingly, increasing numbers of students now want to stand for election:

A lot more students wanted to stand for the School Council in its second year, maybe because it is a lot more visible, there are more projects — and impact ... it sounded more exciting.

(Tanya, School Community Officer)

In this section the evidence presented by staff and students shows how the re-launch of the Student Council has resulted in a shift towards a more *relational way* of working with other stakeholders. It is clear that the co-operative governance structure illuminates spaces of democratic possibility that had previously been inaccessible to students and, through an explicit focus on developing relationships among students and between students and other stakeholders, these spaces lend themselves to a more dialogic, reciprocal approach to student voice. The following section surfaces shifts in power and positionality between educators and students and the challenges this presents as school tries to move from student voice as "you said, we did" towards more democratic, collective forms of voice and engagement.

Co-operative governance: shifts in power and positionality

The findings in this section relate to the impact of the co-operative governance structure on school understandings of power and positionality. The re-launch of a co-operative School Council had caused school leaders to question their previous perceptions of student engagement and what it means to work *with* students:

Previously I've always focused on students' engagement in the lessons through the class teacher ... I suppose, thinking about what you've said, I've always thought about it as students as a done to; I've always kind of done it through the teacher. So this role [responsibility for the Student Council] is very different, it's working with students, as in working directly with students, which I'm really enjoying. It's opened my eyes actually to some of the things that they [students] can do ... Since September, what it's really opened my eyes to is students *do* care, students *do* want to participate and that they are independent and they *do* want to have a say and I think that has really opened my eyes since September.

(Nicola, Deputy Head teacher — Learning)

Nicola's comments surface how the organisational and operational changes instigated by the introduction of the co-operative School Council have facilitated a more relational way of working with students. However, Nicola is honest in her reflection on how this way of working directly with students impacts on feelings of power and positionality. Her responses clearly demonstrate her feeling of a loss of control, a loss of control that would appear to be directly linked to the re-launch of the Student Council and the resulting changes in the school's practice in the area of student voice and student engagement. A change in school's approach to student voice is evident when Nicola explains how she has developed the way that the school runs the Open Evening for prospective students, their parents and carers. Nicola decided to broaden the role of students in Open Evenings to extend beyond that of the usual classroom demonstrations, with students acting as independent 'tour guides', a change which had left her feeling out of her comfort zone in terms of traditional teacher positions of power and control:

So on Open Evening we had tour guides and they took members of the community round the school and they will say what they want to say – which is right – but I suppose the success of the school and the success of what I was driving I don't have control over that, it's them leading that, so that's the change but it's been really, really interesting actually so far ... So many students do want to give up their time because they do want to help the school and they do want meet people and actually they're not scared about talking, meeting someone new and talking about experiences, whereas I thought people wouldn't want to turn up and would be quite shy.

(Nicola, Deputy Head Teacher – Learning)

I suppose the difference is I'm reliant on *them* ... I'm a control freak and I'm losing control (laughter)! No, it's really, really good ... In the past — I *love* working with students — it's just I suppose I love having that control and when you release that control and you're reliant on students, I suppose you are taking a risk because there isn't anything that you can censor or control in any way.

(Nicola, Deputy Head Teacher — Learning)

Nicola's reflections reveal that the re-launched School Council has led to a change in the school's approach to student voice. Students have greater opportunities to say what they think about their school and to have some sort of impact on the way the school operates. Nicola offers another example of how, as a result of working with young people in the School Council, there are now regular spaces for student voice beyond the School Council meetings:

When we had Have Your Say Day (HYSD) the amount of students that in their break or at their lunch completed a slip or wrote on the school's virtual learning environment and participated in form time — and we had 30 volunteers from Year 9 who coordinated and gave up basically before school, break time, lunch time, after school. They gave up that time to collect that student voice and actually so many students did give student voice that it surprised me ... I thought it would be something — I wanted it to work but I thought it might be something we do small scale and then see if we build up but actually it took off and you could hear people talking about it and wanting to know more. So that surprised me — that actually we think the students can't do things and don't want to be involved but they do want to be involved and they do care and they do want to take ownership. I think the difference is because I didn't say "this is what they're doing"; it was "you're in charge of this, it's your day, you're responsible for this".

(Nicola, Deputy Head Teacher — Learning)

In contrast with her earlier approach of seeing students as *done to* via the teachers, Nicola now sets out her hopes for future student voice activities in a very different manner, highlighting her desire to develop a whole school approach: a more reciprocal, dialogic way of working with students:

It's making sure that staff are working with students more ... For example in the past with Newly Qualified Teachers I'd always say 'focus on your teaching, get your classroom sorted' and I still believe that because it's a massive shock when you start but actually getting them involved in different student engagement activities, building, but facilitating opportunities for them to do that, or for students to do that with staff, I think that's really, really important ... I think now all SLT [Senior Leadership Team] should consult with the students and the School Council ... I want to get more SLT coming to those meetings to get that student voice and working together ... having *more* staff coming and not telling students on the Student Council but working together and developing that co-operative value a little bit more.
(Nicola, Deputy Head Teacher – Learning)

Rather than a focus on individualistic interventions, Nicola's way of thinking about working with students now owes more to notions of democratic professionalism and its emphasis on co-operative, collaborative, action between teachers and other stakeholders (Day and Sachs, 2004).

However, changes in approach to student voice also raise challenges, particularly regarding staff and student perceptions of what *matters* in school. Observations of Student Council meetings reveal that discussions often centre on issues such as the quality of food in the dining room, reward schemes, school events and the state of the toilets, rather than any of the 'core business' (Sims, 2006) of the school — teaching and learning. These issues may, on the face of it, appear trivial, yet as the Student Council meetings over the year show, these issues really matter to *all* students across the year groups. Nicola, the Deputy Head Teacher with responsibility for the Student Council, expresses her frustration with what the students wanted to discuss at the School Council meetings:

Also the other thing I think I want to develop is what students give their opinions on because sometimes they revert to something familiar or certain things that obviously are important to them ... Food always comes up a lot.
(Nicola, Deputy Head Teacher — Learning)

Nicola feels that issues such as food are taking up too much time in the Student Council meetings and, from the school's point of view, are not of major importance. However, food is a matter of great importance to the students, which was why it has been raised in every Student Council meeting observed throughout the academic year. The evidence from staff interviews and observations of Student Council activities in practice shows that it is the students who are keen to raise issues around basic needs such as food and a clean environment but that teachers still set the agenda when developments in teaching and learning are to be discussed. Basic needs (food, toilets, the environment) also generate the most feedback from students at whole-school 'Have Your Say Day' events — so should less weight be lent to this form of collective student voice as opposed to students' engagement with matters of teaching and learning?

In Taines' (2012: 247) research into improving urban schools, she states how students tend to select "a surprising, and seemingly trivial, set of school problems as their top reform priorities": school dinners, toilet facilities and teacher-student relationships, mirroring the experience of Nicola at Blakemore School. It is understandable that Nicola's priorities lie in gaining student voice in areas such as conduct grades and Computer Science, issues that can help meet externally set criteria for school and student achievement. Yet, from the students' vantage point, concrete improvements in food quality and toilet facilities are more likely to improve their perceptions of a fair educational environment (Taines, 2012). It is important, therefore, that when considering student voice, school acknowledges what students say is important to *them*, and works with students on resolving these issues, rather than disregarding student concerns and replacing them with top-down policy driven initiatives. Doing so would serve to negate the spaces of possibility for agentic, relational forms of student voice, such as those afforded by the co-operative governance structure:

Teachers and school leaders may see [student] councils as focusing on issues such as school uniform, toilets and canteen arrangements — which have little impact on the core business of schooling, that of teaching and learning ... In fact the evidence suggests that until students have tangible wins on these apparently peripheral issues, which are in fact extremely important to them, they will not trust staff to engage with them on the important issues of teaching and learning (Sims, 2006: 5).

An insight gained from observing the School Council in action is thus that it is helpful for school to “adopt a broad view of what constitutes a conversation about teaching and learning” (Middlehurst, 2013: 8), so as not to disregard what matters to the students themselves and to avoid imposing professional agendas that may reduce students’ trust in forums such as the Student Council. Teachers and staff working with students to meet their basic needs shows students that their views are respected and can be actioned, that students can make tangible differences to their school. This is certainly what, despite initial staff frustrations, is occurring at Blakemore School. Senior staff now attend School Council meetings at the request of the students to answer questions they have raised, explaining issues such as budgetary constraints and health and safety legislation — and to ask for students’ help and ideas in developing school projects. This is a major change in the organisational culture of the school, as previously such matters were not shared with the students. In one meeting the Estates Manager arrived with new plans of the toilet block. He was initially reluctant to show these to the students, as teachers had not yet seen the plans. However, students had many constructive ideas and suggestions that were helpful for the Estates Manager and, as a result, an ongoing dialogue was initiated. Students have also chosen new catering providers and rewards systems, with external providers ‘pitching’ to the School Council and students conducting research at other schools.

Conclusion: New Imaginaries

This article demonstrates how a co-operative school governance structure offers spaces of democratic possibility that can redefine student voice as agentic and relational, rather than passive and individualistic. Blakemore School’s re-launch of the School Council surfaces a power shift away from traditional top-down communication from teacher to student (Warren et al, 2009) towards a two-way, more dialogic encounter (Fielding, 2001) that enables students to develop a sense of agency; the feeling that they can shape the school world around them through taking action with others (Audsely et al, 2013). Furthermore, the re-launch of the Student Council following Blakemore’s conversion to a co-operative school has evidenced positive developments in all three core elements of a relational approach to engagement as defined by Warren et al (2009: 2210):

- i) Relationship building among students and between students and staff.
- ii) A focus on the leadership development of students.
- iii) Efforts to bridge the gap in culture and power between students and educators.

A greater number of young people now have a forum to discuss a wider variety of topics than had previously been possible and that students are able to put their views forward to a different audience, including those who traditionally hold the greatest positions of power in a school: the Senior Leadership Team and the school governors.

This article shows that conversion to a co-operative school, and the re-launch of the School Council that occurred as a result, has caused movements towards *thicker*, participatory forms of democracy in school and has changed both staff and student understandings of student voice. Efforts are clearly being made to view school issues and developments as a shared endeavour to be undertaken by staff and students in collaboration (Thomas, 2012). These findings invite the need for further research into the connection between co-operative governance structures in schools and the more agentic, relational forms and understandings of student voice that can develop as a result of the co-operative impetus to do things democratically. Offering students the spaces to experience solidarity and co-operation in practice (Freire in Rossatto, 2005) in school may have long-lasting effects in society, as young people are able to re-see themselves:

as persons, not merely as role occupants, and in so doing nurture not only a new understanding, [but a] sense of possibility, and felt respect between adults and young people (Fielding, 2010: 67).

The Author

Debbie Ralls is currently finishing her PhD studentship at the University of Manchester. Her thesis explores forms and understandings of engagement in a co-operative school setting, focusing on the potential to develop more equitable, democratic relationships between schools and their students, parents and community members. Prior to commencing her PhD Debbie worked as a teacher and teacher educator in both further and higher education, teaching on and developing literacy, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education programmes and managing an alternative education provision for 13-19-year-olds.

References

- Apple, M W (2011) "Democratic education in neoliberal and neoconservative times." *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 21(1): 21-31. doi:10.1080/09620214.2011.543850
- Audsley, J Chitty, C, O'Connell, J, Watson, D and Wills, J (2013) *Citizen Schools: Learning to rebuild Democracy*. Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Carr, Paul R. (2012) "Democracy, critical pedagogy and the education of educators." In Carr, P, Zyngier, D and Pruyn, M (eds) *Can teachers make a difference? Experimenting with, and Experiencing, Democracy in Education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Day, C and Sachs, J (eds) (2004) *International handbook on the continuing professional development of teachers*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Dyson, A and Kerr, K (2013) *Reviewing the field of school-community relations: Conceptualisations in the literature on school-community relations in disadvantaged areas*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting, Vancouver, 13 April 2013.
- Facer, K, Thorpe, J and Shaw, L (2011) *Co-operative Education and Schools: An old idea for new times?* The BERA Conference, September 6th 2011, London, UK.
- Fielding, M (2001) "Students as Radical Agents of Change." *Journal of Educational Change*, 2(2): 123-141. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1017949213447>
- Fielding, M (2010) "The radical potential of student voice: Creating spaces for restless encounters." *International Journal of Emotional Education* 2(1): n 1-73.
- Gandin, L A and Apple, M W (2002) "Thin versus Thick Democracy in Education: Porto Alegre and the creation of alternatives to neo-liberalism." *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 12(2): 99-115.
- Gandin, L A and Apple, M W (2012) "Can critical democracy last? Porto Alegre and the struggle over 'thick' democracy in education." *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(5): 621-639. doi:10.1080/02680939.2012.710017
- Holland, D, Lachicotte, W Jr, Skinner, D and Cain, C (1998) *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Levinson, B and Stevick, D (eds) (2007) *Reimagining Civic Education: How Diverse Societies Form Democratic Citizens*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Lipman, P (1998) *Race, class, and power in school restructuring*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Middlehurst, T (2013) *Redesigning Schooling -5 Student impact in the redesigned school*. London: Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.
- Monbiot, G (2013) "A Capitalist Command Economy." *The Guardian*, 4 March. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/mar/04/education-capitalist-command-economy>
- Rossatto, C A (2005) *Engaging Paulo Freire's pedagogy of possibility: from blind to transformative optimism*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Sims, E (2006) *A new shape for schooling? Deep Learning 1*. London: Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.
- Taines, C (2012) "Educational or Social Reform? Students Inform the Debate Over Improving Urban Schools." *Education and Urban Society*, 44(3): 247-273. doi:10.1177/0013124510392566
- Thomas, L (2012) *Rethinking the Importance of Teaching: curriculum and collaboration in an era of localism*. London: Royal Society of Arts. <https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/blogs/rsa-re-thinking-the-importance-of-teaching.pdf> (accessed 25 July 2016).
- Warren, M R, Hong, S, Rubin, C L and Uy, P S (2009) "Beyond the Bake Sale: a community-based relational approach to parent engagement in schools." *Teachers College Record*, 111(9): 2209-2254.
- Woodin, T. (2015) *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values: contemporary issues in education*. Abingdon: Routledge.