WELL-BEING AND WELL-BECOMING IN SCHOOLS

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PROVIDING FOR STUDENT VOICE: WHAT? WHY? HOW?

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Abstract: *This paper contributes to the larger topic of student well-being by focusing on student voice. The paper engages with three core questions around student voice: What do we mean by "student voice"? Why should we provide for student voice? How do we provide for student voice? To respond to the three questions, the paper draws on research literature from three fields of study: child well-being, children's participation in decision-making in organizations, and child-centred research methods.*

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Introduction

This paper contributes to the larger discourse on student well-being by focusing on one particular aspect of student well-being: the provision of student voice. While there is - not surprisingly – no agreement on what "human well-being" means,[1] having agency over one's life is generally a characteristic of scholars' understanding of what it means to be well and to live a flourishing life as a human being. For instance, the capabilities approach to human well-being (e.g., Nussbaum, 2000, 2011; Sen, 1993/2009a, 2009b) puts agency at the very centre of well-being; the approach is "focused on choice or freedom, holding that the crucial good societies should be promoting for their people is a set of opportunities, or substantial freedoms, which people then may or may not exercise in action: the choice is theirs" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 18). Also, the approach to "psychological well-being" developed by Ryff and her colleagues (Ryff, 1989, 1995; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 1998) postulate "autonomy" as one of six dimensions of psychological well-being, whereby someone scoring high in this dimension "is self-determining and independent, able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways, regulates behavior from within, evaluates self by personal standards" (Ryff & Keyes, 1995, p. 727).

In schools, where the institutional power lies with the adults involved, "having agency" as a student means "having a voice" in the decision-making process of matters affecting one's life as a student. At the heart of this paper are responses to the questions what is or can be meant by

[1] See Falkenberg (2014) for a systematic overview of different conceptualizations of human well-being in Western scholarly work.

"(providing for) student voice," what rationales can be mustered for the provision of student voice in decisions affecting students' lives, and what principles of implementing student voice might there be if a school wanted to provide for student voice.[2]

For this paper I have drawn on research literature on children's participation in decision-making in organizations, including governmental agencies, on research literature on child well-being more generally, and on research literature on child-centred research methods.[3] I extrapolate the ideas developed in this literature to the school context. One decision I made for this paper is to use the term "student voice" rather than "student participation," which would be a more direct terminological extrapolation from the literature on child participation. Since the term "student participation" has already a somewhat fixed but quite different meaning, I decided to use the term "student voice." I use the term "voice" wherever possible, including where I draw on the child and participation literature, where often other terms, like "participation" or "empowerment," are used.

I will use "(student) voice" with a broad range of meaning to account for the different ideas developed for what it means to provide students with "voice." This broader meaning is important to emphasize in light of Lundy's (2007) argument that the United Nations' Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) calls for more than "giving students a voice." Lundy (2007) argues that while "the concept of 'pupil voice' has received increasing attention in the past decade, a development which is often attributed to the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (p. 927), "giving students a voice" has been too often interpreted as only giving students an opportunity to speak rather than to actually influence decisions, as appropriate. Lundy (2007) argues that the latter is implied by Article 12 of the CRC (p. 933). As we will see, the child participation literature distinguishes different levels (degrees) of participation, including levels that capture Lundy's idea of a proper understanding of Article 12 of the CRC. My use of the term "voice" is equivalent to the use of "participation" in the child participation literature – and, thus, is distinct from the narrow meaning Lundy (2007) gives that term.

The main part of the paper is divided into three sections. The first section addresses the question *what* we (can) mean by the provision of student voice. The second section addresses the question *why* we (might) want provide for (certain levels of) student voice; thus, this section provides different rationalizations for (different levels of) such provision. Finally, the third section identifies principles for *how to* approach the provision of student voice in school contexts.

Providing for Student Voice: What Does It Mean?

What do we mean by providing for student voice? Drawing primarily on literature on child participation in organizations (including governmental agencies and departments), in this section I, first, introduce six "dimensions" of student voice that allow to describe in a more structured and differentiated way different facets of provision of student voice in projects affecting them. In the second part of this section, I approach the understanding of student voice as a question of the culture of a school or school division.

[2] For a more focused discussion of the what, why, and how of providing for student voice in the *assessment of student well-being*, see Falkenberg (in press a).

[3] In this paper I follow the convention of using the term "child" to mean "every human being below the age of eighteen years" (The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d., Article 1).

Dimensions of Student Voice

As the Children and Young People's Unit (2001) points out, the question of child voice in organizations is particularly of concern,

- "where individual decisions are being taken about children's own lives;"
- "where services for, or used by children are being developed or provided locally,"
- "where national policies and services are being developed or evaluated."

(p. 4)

The first two criteria – and the third one as well if we understand "national" in the Canadian school education context as "provincial" or "school divisional" – apply to schools and school divisions as organizations. Drawing on Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, and Sinclair (2003), I distinguish between six dimensions along which different facets of provision of student voice can be described:

- the *nature* of the provision of student voice;
- the *focus* of the provision of student voice;
- the *content* of the provision of student voice;
- the *level* of the provision of student voice;
- the *frequency and duration* of the provision of student voice; and
- *which students* are provided with voice.

In what follows I describe each of these dimensions.

The nature of student voice. This dimension captures the type of activities which give students a voice. I draw on Kirby et al. (2003) on one hand and Ben-Arieh (2005) on the other to distinguish between two aspects of the nature of student voice: place and form. While both aspects are distinct, they are closely linked to warrant subsuming them under one dimension. The place in which students have voice impacts the form their voice can take.

The concern for student voice lies with students' empowerment in processes, in particular decision-making processes, which affect them. The *place* aspect of the nature of student voice captures the place in the process at which students have a voice. For instance, allowing for student voice in the process involved in the offering of elective courses in a high school, the different stages of the process of identifying potential courses, developing the courses, approving the offering of the courses, and, finally, actually offering the courses as part of a school course schedule provides different "places" for student voice in this process – from providing for student voice only at the needs assessment phase to the provision of student voice from needs assessment to the scheduling of the courses.

Let us take the process of measuring students' well-being as another example. The "place" where students have a voice is the place in the measuring process where students play a participatory role. Ben-Arieh (2005, pp. 580-586) distinguishes between five such places:

- participating in the design of the measurement scheme;
- participating as sources of information;
- participating in the collection of data;
- participating in the data analysis; and
- participating in the utilization of the findings.

The *form* of the nature of student voice in a decision-making process refers to the type of activity through which students are provided with voice. For instance, in the example of the offering of elective courses from above, possible forms of student voice in the process of identifying potential courses are: students participate in an anonymous online survey designed by the school administration; students vote for delegates on a committee that decides on a process of how to best survey all students on elective courses of interest to them.

As mentioned before, the types of possible activities (forms of the nature of student voice) are influenced, though not determined, by the place in the process at which students have a voice. Taking the example of measuring student well-being from above, the collection of measurement data (place) allow for particular forms of participation, like the participation in student-led interviews. In this example, the measuring of student well-being is the project for which we want to consider student voice; the collection of measurement data is the place of the nature of student voice under consideration; and the activity of students engaging in student-led interviews to collect data is the form of the nature of student voice. As this example illustrates, the form of the nature of student voice (students engaging in student-led interviews) is influenced by the specific place aspect of the nature of student voice (the collection of measurement data).

The focus of student voice. This dimension of student voice allows to distinguish between different provisions of student voice depending on whether the school educational project is focused on specific students or on students as a whole (within a school or school division). "The nature of the participation will vary between these different types of decision-making. However, there is considerable evidence that children and young people want to be consulted about both areas in their lives" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 24).

For instance, a project involving decision-making affecting students in a school could focus on the support of a specific student or a small group of students involved in a bullying incident. In both cases the focus of the project and of the decisions that are to be made as part of the project is on and primarily affect (although not always exclusively) a specific individual or a small group of specific individuals. Another school project, on the other hand, could be focused on developing a school-wide anti-bullying policy or strategy. In this latter case, the focus of the project is on all students in the whole school.

The content of student voice. Kirby et al. (2003) observed differences in the way children are empowered and participate in decision-making within different realms of children's lives, not all of which are of immediate relevance to all children to the same degree:

> The extent or level of children's involvement in decision-making is not consistent across different subjects or sectors. A review of the literature suggests at one end considerable participatory activity around community development and urban renewal, and at the other, limited involvement of children in the juvenile justice system. (p. 25)

Understood in the context of student voice, the content dimension captures the life and experiential domain of students that a school or school divisional project is to affect. For instance, the content of student voice within a school-based project might concern the introduction of new elective courses in a high school (a specific school life domain for high school students) or it might be the establishing of the school division-wide strategic plan for the school year (a project that affects a range of school life domains of all students in the school division). I assume that the former has traditionally involved greater student voice in one form or another than the latter. Giving consideration to this dimension of content of student voice, one faces the question in which domains of students school life students have voice and in which their voices are less heard and with what rationale.

The level of the provision of student voice. This dimension is to capture the degree to which students are provided with voice in the assessment of their well-being and well-becoming. Two perspectives in characterizing the level of student voice can be distinguished: student perspective and adult perspective.

Student perspective. Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation provides a list of increasingly higher levels of provision of child participation in projects concerned with or affecting children. Following Hart (1992), we can distinguish between eight levels of student voice, starting with three forms of no voice followed by five increasing levels of student voice.[4] Table 1 provides Hart's list with explanations adjusted to the context of student voice. Following Hart (1992, p. 11), we can use the subsequent (expanded and modified) list of criteria to establish the level of (the provision of) student voice on an issue relevant to students, whereby a positive response to a criterion question suggests a higher level of student voice on the issue:

- Is the issue and the need for student voice student-initiated?
- Do students (truly) understand the issue?
- Do students (truly) know who made the decision of providing them with a voice on the issue and why? Do students (truly) understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on an issue?
- Are students provided with a (truly) meaningful rather than "decorative" voice on the issue? Does student voice impact decisions on the issue?
- Do students volunteer their voice after the issue, background, and the process involved were made clear to them?

[4] According to Hart (1992, p. 8), the ladder metaphor for child participation draws on Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation. For an alternative, but less differentiated framework for analyzing the level of child participation, see Kirby et al. (2003, p. 22). In what follows, I will replace Hart's use of the phrase "degree of participation" by "level of participation" to stay consistent with the terminology used in this paper.

Form of Student Voice[5]		Characteristics[6]
Levels of Voice	8. Student-initiated, shared decisions with adults	• *the activities are student directed* • the issue and need for student voice is student-initiated • students are provided with a truly meaningful voice on the issue: the decision-making is shared between students and adults • students truly and fully understand the issue • students truly and fully understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on the issue • students volunteer their voice fully informed
	7. Student-initiated and directed	• the activities are adult-directed • *the issue and need for student voice is student-initiated* • students are provided with a truly meaningful voice on the issue: the decision-making is shared between students and adults • students truly and fully understand the issue • students truly and fully understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on the issue • students volunteer their voice fully informed
	6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with students	• the activities are adult-directed • the issue and need for student voice is adult-initiated • *students are provided with a truly meaningful voice on the issue: the decision-making is shared between students and adults* • students truly and fully understand the issue • students truly and fully understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on the issue • students volunteer their voice fully informed
	5. Consulted and informed	• the activities are adult-directed • the issue and need for student voice is adult-initiated • students are consulted on the issue and then informed about the decision on the issue after adults made the decision • *students truly and fully understand the issue* • *students truly and fully understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on the issue* • students volunteer their voice fully informed
	4. Assigned but informed	• the activities are adult-directed • the issue and need for student voice is adult-initiated • *students are consulted on the issue and then informed about the decision on the issue after adults made the decision* • students might not fully understand the issue • students might not fully understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on the issue (a voice is "assigned" to them) • students volunteer their voice fully informed

[5] The labels for each form are taken without change from Hart (1992).
[6] For each level of voice I have indicated the difference to its proceeding level by italicizing the change in feature.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Forms of Non-Voice</td><td>3.
Tokenism</td><td>• the activities are adult-directed
• the issue and need for student voice is adult-initiated
• students are not truly consulted on the issue and might not be informed about the decision on the issue after adults made the decision
• students might not fully understand the issue
• students might not fully understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on the issue (a voice is “assigned” to them)
• students volunteer their voice although they might not be fully informed</td></tr>
<tr><td>2.
Decoration</td><td>• the activities are adult-directed
• the issue and need for student voice is adult-initiated
• students are not truly consulted on the issue and might not be informed about the decision on the issue after adults made the decision
• students might not fully understand the issue
• students do not fully understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on the issue (a voice is “assigned” to them)
• students might not volunteer their voice</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.
Manipulation</td><td>• the activities are adult-directed
• the issue and need for student voice is adult-initiated
• students are not truly consulted on the issue and might not be informed about the decision on the issue after adults made the decision
• students do not understand the issue
• students do not understand the motivation behind them receiving a voice on the issue (a voice is “assigned” to them)
• students do not volunteer their voice</td></tr>
</table>

Table 1. Levels of provision of student voice; based on Hart’s Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992, p. 8).

Four features of the list of levels of provision of student voice need to be emphasized. First, conceptually, levels of student voice are conceptualized for issues or projects, not for schools or school divisions as organizations *per se*. This means that the list is used to respond to the question, “What is the level to which students have a voice on this (particular) issue or in this (particular) project?” A school or school divisional approach to the provision of student voice will be suggested in the section on cultures of student voice.

Second, the model of conceptualizing different levels of student voice is *hierarchical* in nature, with a higher level of student voice being *in principle* more desirable. The hierarchical structure reflects the importance of higher levels of student voice in school education provided in the rationale section below.[7]

[7] Similarly, the hierarchical structure of Hart’s Ladder of Participation is motivated by the educative purpose he sees for the higher levels of student participation (Hart, 1992, p. 4).

Third, while the list of levels of student voice is hierarchical in principle (with the idea that higher is better), the appropriateness of the level of student voice *for a particular issue or project* is not solely determined by the hierarchy but also by the nature of the issue, the context in which the issue arises, and the readiness of the students. The nature of an issue, for instance, might be such that it is a division-wide issue that concerns multiple layers of educational partners with organizational implications at different levels. In this case an assigned but informed voice (level 4) might be all that is possible in terms of provision of student voice. The context of an issue, for instance, might be such that it is directly linked to divisional policies and contractual obligations – for instance the collective agreement – so that students' involvement in the actual decision-making process is not or only in a very limit way possible. In the given example, an assigned but informed voice (level 4) might be all that is possible in terms of student voice. Also, an issue relevant to early years students, for instance, might be of a level of complexity of the issue that students might not be able to fully understand, so that an assigned but informed voice (level 4) might be all that is possible in terms of level of provision of student voice.

Fourth, the levels of provision of student voice presented in Table 1 are described from the perspectives of students. The characteristics for each level speak to what students do, understand, and experience. Some of the literature on distinguishing different levels of student voice characterizes those different levels from what adults do differently, which is the focus of the next section.

Adult perspective. Shier (2001) has developed a model for the provision of student voice that provides an adult perspective on different levels of such provision in the sense that he outlines what *adults* are to consider and do rather than what students are (given or permitted) to do.[8] An adult perspective on the provision of student voice should not be seen as an alternative model to the student perspective of student voice presented above. As Shier (2001) writes about his model in light of Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation, "it [Shier's model] is not intended to be a replacement for the ladder of participation, but may serve as an additional tool for practitioners, helping them to explore different aspects of the participation process" (p. 109). While in a technical sense, each perspective can be translated into the other, in a practical sense both perspectives complement each other: While the student perspective on the provision of student voice focuses our attention on what students are or should be able/allowed to do as part of having a voice on an issue, the adult perspective focuses on what adults are or should be committed to and actively do to provide for student voice. This practical distinctiveness of the adult perspective is reflected in Shier's (2001) *two*-dimensional model, compared to Hart's (1992) one-dimensional model. In addition to the hierarchy of levels of voice, Shier (2001) introduces the hierarchy of levels of *commitment* by adults/an organization to the respective level of voice. Shier (2001) distinguishes three types of adult commitment to student voice of increasing levels: adults' (motivational) readiness for student voice; the existence of opportunities to provide for student voice (e.g., through existing procedures or activities); and finally the existence of policy requiring student voice. Shier's (2001, p. 111) two-dimensional matrix then looks as follows, adjusted to a focus on student voice on a school educational issue or project (Table 2):

[8] As before, for the purpose of this paper I have adapted Shier's (2001) focus on child participation in decision-making in organizations to the context of student voice in a school educational setting.

Level of Voice	Level of Commitment		
	Readiness	*Opportunities*	*Obligations*
5. Students share power and responsibility for decision-making	Adults are ready to share power and responsibility with students	There are procedures that enable students to share power and responsibility for decision-making	Policy requires that students and adults share power and responsibility for decision-making
4. Students are involved in decision-making process	Adults are ready to let students join in the decision-making process	There are procedures that enable students to join in the decision-making process	Policy requires that students are involved in the decision-making process
3. Students' views are taken into account	Adults are ready to take students' views into account	The decision-making process enables students' views to be taken into account	Policy requires that students' views are given due weight in decision-making
2. Students are supported in expressing their views	Adults are ready to support students expressing their views	Adults have ideas and activities to help students express their views	Policy requires that students are supported in expressing their views
1. Students are listened to	Adults are ready to listen to students	Adults are enabled to listen to students	Policy requires that students are listened to

Table 2. Two-dimensional matrix of levels of provision of student voice; based on Shier's Pathways to Participation (Shier, 2001, p. 111).

Shier (2001, p. 111) considers his matrix to represent a linear increase in level of provision of student voice in accordance with the following scheme:

Level of Voice	Level of Commitment		
	Readiness	*Opportunities*	*Obligations*
5.			highest level
4.			
3.		(cont.)	
2.			
1.	lowest level		

Table 3. Linear increase (across two dimensions) of the level of provision of student voice in Shier's Pathways to Participation (Shier, 2001, p. 111).

The frequency and duration of the provision of student voice. Because "children and young people's power is also affected by how often and for how long they are enabled to influence decisions" (Kirby et al., 2003), this dimension is to capture the frequency and duration of the provision of student voice that a particular project affords to students.

> Consultations are often 'one-off' or irregular events, and only a few formal activities continue indefinitely (e.g. suggestion boxes), whereas informal engagement of listening and responding to children and young people can be used frequently and even daily as part of child-focused practice. (Kirby et al., 2003 p. 27)

Which students are provided with voice? Students are not a homogeneous group. They differ according to age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, culture, disability, economic circumstances, and many more aspects that might be relevant to the question of student voice in a project affecting them. This dimension of student voice gives consideration to the inhomogeneity of the student population in a school or school division and draws attention to the important question of who *actually* has voice in a project. This question is important for several reasons.

First and foremost, the question is important because students affected by the decisions made as part of a project should be *represented* among those students who have a voice in the project. Considering the inhomogeneity across different groups of students (e.g., early-years students versus high school students) but also within specific groups (e.g., within all grade 7 students in a particular school), the question of who actually has a voice is important in light of decisions potentially affecting different (groups of) children differently, and that a difference in impact should be reflected in who actually participates and in what way in the project. Thus, the process of selecting students for participation (having voice) is of great importance in order to achieve representation relative to impact.

Second, "what is appropriate for one group may not be for another" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 27). This point is less concerned with representation relative to impact, but rather with appropriateness of participatory activities relative to specific groups of affected students. Participatory activities (having voice) with respect to dimensions discussed so far (level of participation, nature of participation, and so on) should be appropriate for the (group of) students intended to be involved in the project.

In practical terms, it might sometimes be more helpful to ask who (which group of students) has *not* actually a voice in a project relative to who is affected by the decisions made as part of the project. If a group of students is overlooked for representational participation when deciding on who is to participate (who has voice), explicitly looking for groups of students who are not represented might help counter the original blind sidedness.

Cultures of Student Voice

So far I have discussed dimensions of the provision of student voice as they apply to individual projects affecting students. The literature on child participation talks, however, also of "cultures of participation" (e.g., Children and Young People's Unit, 2001; Kirby et al., 2003, chapter 3). A culture-of-participation approach to child participation within an organization

> moves thinking away from the specifics of 'what methods do we use to talk and listen to children' to broader questions about organisational cultures. How do we ensure that participation or the active listening to children becomes part and parcel of the formal and informal ways in which organisations take decisions? How do participatory approaches become embedded within organisational processes? (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 30)

In their study, Kirby et al. (2003) inquired into the quality of the provision of child participation in a range of agencies that work with or provide services to children in Great Britain and that have been providing those children with some form of participation. Thus, while Kirby et al. (2003) distinguish between different cultures of participation, what these cultures all have in common is that they provide children *systematically* with some form of participation in matters affecting them.

Following Kirby et al. (2003), we can distinguish between three types of culture of student voice in schools:[9]

- consultation-focused schools;
- student voice-focused schools; and
- student-focused schools.

Schools have obviously as their primary concern and focus students' educational needs. Thus, it is important to stress here, that the distinction between the different cultures of student voice is not about a distinction of schools with respect to their levels of concern for or focus on students' development and their educational needs, but rather it is focused on the *systematic role* that the provision of student voice plays in a school's day-to-day practice. Since such practice is driven by the adults in a school as the ones who have by default the institutional power, we can draw on Shier's (2001, p. 111) "Pathways to Participation" to describe each of the three types by characterizing a culture of student voice through (1) the actual practices of providing for student voice in the school, (2) the readiness of adults in the school to provide certain levels of student voice, and (3) the policies and principles that frame practices of providing for student voice in the school.[10] Combining the work of Kirby et al. (2003) and Shier (2001) in such way results in the following characterization of the three types of culture of student voice in a school.

Consultation-focused schools. Let's first consider the *actual practices* that provide for opportunities for student voice in a consultation-focused school, i.e. the centre column in Table 2. Kirby et al. (2003) describe consultation-focused organizations as "organisations [which] ask children and young people's views and experiences – usually using one-off regular consultations and/or evaluation exercises – to inform service and policy development" (p. 40); while such organizations take their views in account, children "do not decide how services are developed" (p. 40). In terms of its actual practices, then, a consultation-focused school is characterized as a school that consults its students on a range of issues that affect the students directly in order for the educators to take students' views on the issues into account when they – the educators – make the decisions on the issues.

Kirby et al. (2003) characterize educators' *readiness* for certain levels of student voice in a consultation-focused school (left column in Table 2) in terms of the purpose for which adults provide for student voice on issues affecting students: "A consultation-focused organisation

[9] Forthwith I use the phrase "culture of student voice" rather than "culture of participation" to stay consistent with the terminology decided upon for this paper. Furthermore, while I will speak here of culture of student voice in schools, the ideas to follow can be directly applied to school divisions and to provincial school systems. Readers should also keep in mind that as with any categorization of this type, the categories are given prototypically; actual school cases will not just fall into one category with respect to all of the characteristics of this category.

[10] I will summarily refer to the adults in a school as "educators."

primarily consults children and young people to ensure services and policies best fit their needs" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 40). With this in mind, educators' readiness to provide for certain levels of student voice is characterized by: (a) educators' concern for meeting students' needs in the best possible way, and (b) educators' readiness to take students' views into account when deciding on what those needs are and how best to address those needs.

At the level of *policies and principles* that frame practice of providing for student voice (the right-hand column in Table 2), a consultation-focused school has policies that require the consultation of students on certain issues affecting them and has established principles of practice that guide this consultation process. These principles of practice are grounded in the acknowledgement of student voice as an important means to better address students' needs.

Student voice-focused schools. In terms of the *actual practice*, student voice-focused schools "do more than just ask young people their opinions and preferences (although they may also undertake consultations); they enable them to influence certain decisions within the organisation" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 42). Furthermore, in student voice-focused schools some activities of providing for student voice are ongoing, although limited to certain affairs, while other participatory activities might be time bound (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 42). Finally, "often only a sample of children and young people are involved, rather than all of those being served" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 43).

In student voice-focused schools, educators' *readiness* to provide for student voice is characterized by their "valu[ing] young people's right to be involved in making decisions, as well as [recognizing] this has benefits for the [school]" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 43). While in consultation-focused schools, educators' readiness to provide for student voice is grounded in their acknowledgement of student voice as a means to better address students' needs, in student voice-focused schools, on the other hand, educators' readiness is grounded in the acknowledgement that students have a right to be heard.

In terms of *policies and principles* that frame practice of providing for student voice, a student voice-focused school has policies in place that require student involvement in the decision-making processes concerning certain issues affecting them. The school has also principles of practice that frame such involvement as partially ongoing and are grounded in the acknowledgement that students have a right to be heard and to be involved in decision-making process on matters affecting them.

Student-focused schools. In terms of *actual practices* of providing for student voice in student-focused schools, students are "involved on an on-going (daily and/or regular) basis. Their views shape the care they receive and the services they use" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 44), which means that students are systematically and regularly participating in decision-making at the classroom and school level in matters affecting them. Students "are involved in many ways and have varying levels of influence within different organisational contexts" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 44). Going beyond student voice-focused schools, in student-focused schools *all* (groups of) students are

participating systematically and regularly in the decision-making process either directly or representationally.[11]

Student-focused schools consider the provision of student voice an integral part of their understanding of school education and its purpose or a means to accomplishing that purpose (see the section on rationales for student voice below). For instance, a student-focused school might consider student voice in decision-making at the classroom and school level an integral part of citizenship education and might consider citizenship education to be a core purpose of school education. Accordingly, student-focused schools

> consult [students] about adult agendas and also enable children and young people to identify their own agendas. There are mechanisms in place to support children and young people in expressing their views whenever they have something to say about their lives, needs or their services, and there are people who will listen. (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 45).

In student-focused schools, educators' *readiness* is characterized by their conviction that student voice in the sense of students' participation in decision-making processes in all matters affecting them is fundamental to the aims and underlying values of the school and as such cannot be limited to only certain contexts or projects.

In terms of *policies and principles* that frame practice of providing for student voice, a student-focused school has policies in place that require the ongoing involvement of all students (directly or representationally) in the decision-making processes concerning all issues affecting them. The school has also principles of practice that frame such involvement as ongoing and are grounded in the acknowledgement that such an involvement is central to the aims and values of the school.

Rationales for Providing for Student Voice

After having explored a conceptual understanding of what it can mean for schools and school divisions to provide for student voice, this current section introduces and discusses different rationales that can be brought to bear to justify the provision of student voice. For this purpose I expand on Ben-Arieh's (2010a, 2010b) categorization of rationales for considering children's views in the assessment of their well-being and distinguish between four types of rationales for providing for student voice:

- normative rationales;
- theoretical rationales;
- methodological rationales; and
- educative rationales.

[11] Kirby et al. (2003) do not identify this particular quality of child-focused organizations. However, this quality seems a straight forward extension of the corresponding quality of a student voice-focused school with respect to the question which students actually have a voice in the school.

Normative Rationale

This type of rationale draws on the arguments developed in the child rights movement, which make the case that children have a *right* to have a say in matters affecting them (e.g, Doek, 2014; Lansdown, 2001).[12] Because these rationales argue for what *should be* the case, they are categorized as *normative* rationales. This normative stance on matters of participation finds its most prominent manifestation in the United Nations' Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC). The CRC was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and "nearly all States are now parties [to the CRC]. Somalia and the United States have not yet ratified the Convention but have signed it, indicating their support" (UNICEF, n.d.).

As Doek (2014) points out, "although the CRC does not contain a provision explicitly providing for the right to participation, it became an inherent part of the implementation of all its articles" (p. 206). It is in particular Article 12 of the CRC that is referred to when pointing to the "self-determination rights" of children codified in the CRC (Ruck, Peterson-Badali, & Helwig, 2014, p. 2537), which Ruck et al. (2014) distinguish from the "nurturance rights" primarily or exclusively considered in earlier approaches to child rights as, for instance, in the 1959 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child (see Doek, 2014).[13] Article 12 of the CRC gives children the right to freely express their views on all matters affecting them as well as the right "to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting [them]" (The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

As the previous section on the different dimensions of student voice illustrates, providing students with voice can mean quite different things. These different meanings can lead to quite different interpretations of what Article 12 of the CRC means in practical terms (Lundy, 2007). How far an understanding of children's rights to self-determination can go in terms of child/student voice in matters that affect them is illustrated by Summerhill School, founded in 1921 by Alexander Neill, and by the Jewish orphanage that Janusz Korczak, a Polish physician, ran in Warsaw in the 1920s to 1940s. Neill established a boarding school as a democratic community governed by the students themselves (Neill, 1960), and Korczak "established a children's parliament and a children's court" in the orphanage (Doek, 2014, p. 190). Notably, both are examples of an understanding of children's participation rights that exceeded the understanding of those rights expressed in the CRC and that preceded by decades the development and ratification of the CRC.

Theoretical Rationale

This type of rationale for student voice "is based on accepting childhood as a phase of itself and children as active actors in society rather than subjects for societal concern" (Ben-Arieh, 2005, p. 574). Driven by the so-called new social studies of childhood (e.g., James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998;

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[12] For a discussion of four different perspectives on the conceptual relationship between child rights and child well-being, see Falkenberg (2016).

[13] Another scheme to distinguish between different types of child rights (see, for instance, Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, n.d.) is the distinction between provision rights (rights that are concerned with children being proficiently provided for), protection rights (rights that are concerned with the protection of children), and participation rights (rights that are concerned with children's participation and decision-making in matters affecting them).

Lee, 1999; Prout & James, 1997), this "re-theorizing of childhood" (Barker & Weller, 2003, p. 34) understands childhood not anymore as (only) a phase of "adult becoming," but rather as a phase of life in its own right, like marriage, parenting, and retirement. The re-theorizing implies a view of children not as passive subjects of adult directives, but rather of children as the experts and agents of their lives. This provides the rationale for giving children a voice in matters that affect their lives if one is concerned for children and the quality of their lives – be it a concern for their needs or for their rights: you would ask the expert of this particular child's life, namely the child themselves.

This theoretical rationale has also been used in the development of child-centred research (e.g., Barker & Weller, 2003) to move children from passive "subjects" who solely provide information for an adult-established research agenda to active research participants who have input into or even direct the research agenda and who actively participate in all phases of a research project, from the design to the utilization of the findings. Similarly, the re-theorizing of childhood provides a theoretical rationale for educators for the provision of student voice on matters affecting them, from the consultation of students on school matters to active decision and agenda making by students in matters concerning school life.

Methodological Rationale

This type of rationale for student voice draws on the methodological considerations in the literature on researching child well-being and is linked to what Ben-Arieh (2010a) has called "the emergence of the subjective perspective" (p. 12) in this line of research:

> This [the consideration of children's subjective views about their well-being] has proved particularly important given that studies have shown, especially during adolescence, that parents do not always accurately convey their child's feelings . . . . Further, studies have shown that including the perspectives of children is important not only because they differ from those of the adults, but because doing so respects children as persons, better informs policy-makers, provides a foundation for child advocacy and enhances legal and political socialization of children. (Ben-Arieh, 2010a, p. 13)

What Ben-Arieh provides in the quotation is a *methodological* rationale for the inclusion of children's subjective perspectives in research on child well-being: research on child well-being should use methods that include data from children's subjective perspectives on their well-being in order to make the findings more valid. Because "children are experts on their own lives" (Thomas, 2001, p. 109), considering their subjective perspectives on their well-being makes the findings methodologically more valid by providing for a richer and more diverse data source and, thus, impacts positively the statistical validity (Langbein, 2015, pp. 32-36) and construct validity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, pp. 188-189). Furthermore, the quotation above provides a second methodological rationale. Including children's perspectives on their well-being makes it more likely that the findings have a greater impact on policy ("better informs policy-makers") and advocacy ("provides a foundation for child advocacy"). Methodologically spoken, the inclusion of children's perspectives provides for greater catalytic validity of the findings, whereby "catalytic validity simply strives to ensure that research leads to action" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 187; see also Lather, 1991, p. 68).

Parallel *methodological* rationales can be given to argue for the provision of student voice in schools and school divisions in matters affecting them, because those who ultimately make decisions on those matters – which might include students themselves, depending on the level of provision of student voice – would want to consider students' perspectives on the matter as data informing the decisions as one form of the nature of student voice provided for. If one accepts that students are the experts of their own lives as students, then providing students with voice in matters affecting their lives as students will make the findings from data on students' perspectives methodologically more valid, in the statistical and construct sense. Collecting these data for the purpose of informing the decision-making would then make these findings on students' perspectives also more catalytically valid.

Educative Rationale

This type of rationale for student participation in decision-making in matters affecting them focuses on the positive impact that the *process* of student participation can have on students. The Children and Young People's Unit (2001) suggests that "good participation opportunities [for children and young people] produce more confident and resilient young people" (p. 6), and Hart (1992) writes:

> a nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. The confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice. It is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy. (p. 4)

Both the Children and Young People's Unit (2001) and Hart (1992) provide rationales for policy makers on child participation in decision-making processes affecting them. The educative rationales they provide are even more powerful in a school education context, where active citizenship is a goal of the whole endeavour of the institution (see, for instance, the Manitoba social studies curriculum, and the Manitoba Government's mission for the public school system (Manitoba Education and Training, n.d.)). Thus, providing for student voice in schools and school divisions, the rationale goes, contributes as an authentic learning opportunity to a central goal of school education in a democracy.

Principles of Providing for Student Voice

In this section I bring together ideas from the literature on how to provide for child voice. Rather than "how-to" guidelines, these ideas will be presented in form of principles to consider when planning for the provision of student voice.[14]

[14] For a list of such principles specifically focused on the provision of student voice in assessments for student well-being, see Falkenberg (in press a).

Principle 1

> *Principle 1*: Consider grounding the provision of student voice in a genuine interest in students' views.[15]

The phrase "genuine interest" is meant in a more rigorous way than it might sound at first. Drawing on Thomas (2001), the rigorousness of the notion of genuine interest in students' views shows in the ways in which that genuine interest is demonstrated toward students and on students' terms. What this can mean is demonstrated in a study with 8-12-year old children, through which Thomas and O'Kane (2000) identified children's understanding of what it means for an adult to "communicate well" with them. Summarizing these findings, Thomas (2001) identifies the following eight qualities of such "good communication" with children as far as their participation in decision-making is concerned:

- "*Time*: it is essential to have enough time to spend with children: children do not necessarily want to talk by appointment. Time also means working at the child's pace, allowing him or her to stay in control." (p. 107)
- "*Relationship, trust and honesty*: children communicate best with people with whom they have relationships of warmth and trust. It is important to be friendly and open, empathetic and above all 'straight' with children." (p. 108)
- "*Active listening*" (p. 107).
- "*Choice, information and preparation*: children must have a choice about whether and how they participate in a decision-making process. They are more able to have their say if they have been prepared for the discussion and given time about things beforehand." (p. 107)
- "*Support and encouragement*: children need support and active encouragement to speak up, especially when they have something difficult or negative to express. An adult may sometimes need to offer to express children's views for them. Children do not like it when they feel they are being judged or criticized, and they do not like to be 'put on the spot'." (p. 107)
- "*Activities*: many children find it very boring to 'just sit and talk'. Games, writing, drawing and other activities can be used to make the process more interesting. 'Life story work' can be an excellent way to involve children in reflecting on their situation (see Ryan and Walker, 1993)." (p. 107)
- "*The child's agenda*: it is important to give children space to talk about issues that concern them rather than just respond to adults' questions." (p. 107).
- "*Serious fun*: the fact that serious matters are being discussed does not mean that everyone has to be po-faced. Some children find this threatening, and most find it alienating. If decision-making processes are made more enjoyable, children are more likely to get involved." (p. 107)

[15] The phrase "genuine interest in students' views" is taken from Thomas (2001), who wrote, "The key to successful communication [with children] lies in having a genuine interest in the child and what she or he is thinking, as well as the ability to communicate that genuineness to the child" (p. 106). For the principle under discussion, I expand Thomas's original focus on matters of communicating with students to all dimensions of student voice.

A genuine interest in students' views manifests in enacting these student-identified eight qualities of "good communication" – school-wide and at the individual educator level.

Principle 2

Schools (in Canada) are public institutions with the mandate for the formal education of students; hence, all projects undertaken in schools are as such projects that affect students. In other words, at the very heart of the mandate, practices and services of schools are projects affecting students' lives. That means that the question of student voice – the role of students in the decision-making process on matters affecting them – concerns the very core of school as an institution. The question of the provision of student voice, thus, is not just pertinent at the individual project level, but even more so at the level of the culture of the school. Hence, the concern for student voice is and should be particularly one of a cultural nature:

> *Principle 2*: Consider framing the concern for student voice (also) as a concern for the development of a culture of student-voice in the school or school division.

This principle suggests that in order to address the concern for student voice, a school should consider making the provision of student voice "part and parcel of the formal and informal ways in which organizations [here: schools] take decisions" (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 30), and thus, adopting a school-cultural approach to the provision of student voice. Such an approach would be particularly supported by the educative rationale for the provision of student voice introduced above. This rationale suggests – broadly spoken – that giving students voice is educative; it provides students with the experience of having voice, including what it means to have voice, the importance of having voice, and how to assert one's voice. The educative rationale suggests that such educative experience is particular important to the democratic citizenship education of students. If the provision of student voice is part of the school culture – be it in a consultation-focused, a student voice-focused, or a student-focused school – students, the rationale argues, are enculturated into a culture of participation and voice in decisions affecting them.

In the articulation of Principle 2 I added "also" in brackets to suggest as part of the principle that the concern for student voice should *not only* be framed as a cultural approach. The concern should also lie with individual projects affecting students in schools. I suggest that in recognition that the provision of student voice at the cultural level and the individual project level are different in nature, which in turn might require different considerations. While a school might have established a consultation-focused culture of student voice, there should be space for individual projects to go beyond the provisions and practices of a consultation-focused culture and include, for instance, for a particular project affecting students in the school a level of student voice at the eighth level listed in Table 1, i.e. the project is student initiated and involves a shared decision-making process between students and educators.

Principle 3

As the history of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (e.g., Lundy, 2014; Mekonen & Tiruneh, 2014; UNICEF, n.d.) illustrates, the view that children have and should be given voice and what that actually means has been changing throughout human history and the history of

individual cultures. This contingent nature of the socially constructed and culturally anchored notion of student voice needs to be given consideration:

> *Principle 3*: Consider that the very notion of "student voice" is a socially constructed and culturally anchored construct and that its understanding at the individual and communal level has been changing and continues to change.

This principle should not be understood as providing a rationale for, for instance, a low level of provision of student voice (see Table 1) based on cultural views and practices or to undermine the idea of a universal declaration of child rights. Rather, the principle should encourage the consideration of two ideas: first, that the contingent nature of our understanding of student voice requires an ongoing discourse around this very understanding to make the cultural forces acting upon that understanding more transparent and, thus, open to critical inquiry; and second that this discourse needs to be sensitive to the *contingent nature* of adults' views of student voice.

Drawing on the discourse around the socially constructed and culturally anchored concept of well-being (see, for instance, Falkenberg, in press a, in press b) can help illustrate the notion behind Principle 3. Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008) have argued that even universal experiential qualities like "emotional satisfaction" are experienced and understood as such by the one having the experiences *only within a cultural interpretive framework*:

> This is not to say that people from other times and other places have not enjoyed and pursued emotional satisfaction. Such a claim is absurd. Rather, it is to point out that throughout history and across cultures, individual satisfaction has generally taken a backseat to the goals, purposes, and priorities of larger collectives and that when emotional satisfaction has been experienced it is often of a different kind, derived not from internal positive emotions, but from living in accordance with a social order typically situated within a broader cosmological framework. (p. 571)

This suggests a need for our sensitization to the contingent nature of our understanding of well-being, but also a need for making our own cultural interpretive framework explicit and transparent so that it can be critically inquired into, especially if we have power over others, be it as adults over children, or Western researchers over those from other cultures they study: "cross-cultural studies of happiness, in Western terms of individual satisfaction . . . , can seriously distort the experience of non-Western people" (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008, p. 571).

Principle 4

The research literature on child-centred research methods that I have drawn from for this paper suggests a fourth principle when planning for the provision of student voice. This principle focuses on a methodological aspect of the provision for student voice, that means it focuses on the form aspect of the nature of the provision, which deals with the question of the ways (methods) through which students are provided with voice in a project affecting them.

Hill (2006) reviewed "the evidence about children's expressed views on methods used by adults to obtain children's views," particularly those methods "that involve direct communication between children and researchers or consultants" (p. 69). His conclusion is that "there is no one

'best' method from young people's points of view. Many young people recognize that different methods suit different people and purposes, so that ideally they should be offered a choice and range of methods" (Hill, 2006, p. 76). Other literature complements this call for a consideration of a range of methods when soliciting students' views on matters affecting them. While the referenced literature somewhat narrowly focuses on *consultative* approaches to student voice, the underlying principle can be expanded to *participatory* approaches to student voice more generally:

> *Principle 4*: Consider as forms of student voice a range of participatory methods to better account for
> (a) the general power differentials between children on one hand and adults on the other hand in general and in a school setting in particular;
> (b) a range of participatory capacities of and among children; and
> (c) a range of students' preferences.

Following I elaborate on each of the three points listed in Principle 4.

(a) There are two implications of the power differential that generally exists between children and adults in the context of a participatory approach to student voice. First, students' relative powerlessness "can in some cases make them susceptible to saying what they think adults want to hear" (Thomas, 2001, p. 106). Second, children "are often suspicious of adults' questions and reluctant to answer openly" (Thomas, 2001, p. 106). From a methodological perspective, both issues are linked to the question of power and trust. In the former case, the methodological question is how to give students a sense of power over the responses they are asked to provide or the actions they want to engage in as part the provision of student voice. Here is an overlap with Principle 1, and the suggestions provided there might also address the challenges here. Furthermore, a higher level of student voice (see Table 1) and the use of peers as a method of engaging student voice (e.g., using peer interviews) might make students less suspicious of the process of providing for student voice and less reluctant to openly provide one's view on a matter. In support of this approach to the methodological concerns discussed here, Hill (2006) found that "young people generally think that if they or their peers have influenced the questions they are asked, then the response will be better" and that "some evidence indicates that [the use of student peers] does encourage other young people to be more open to those they see as being similar in terms of age and experience" (p. 80).

(b) Students, especially younger students, have "communicative skills and styles [that] are often different from those of adults: less verbal, more demonstrative and less formal, for example" (Thomas, 2001, p. 106). As this example illustrates, what the literature on student voice – in particular the one based on a child rights perspective – emphasizes is that the difference in communication is best understood as "different ways of communicating" rather than "less competent/developed ways of communicating." Thus, the question facing the provision of student voice is not what competencies students need to be able to have to participate, but rather, how can the provision process account for the way in which students most authentically provide their voice. While students' forms of communication have a developmental aspect to them, those forms are also social-cultural. Choosing a range of methods of providing for student voice even for a student cohort of the same age range is what is methodologically called for. A number of methods have been developed and used to work with the communication skills and styles of children, e.g., drama and role play, painting and drawing, draw-and-tell techniques, life story work, group work, non-

verbal communication, photography, stories, diaries, songs, web-based methods, and child-let neighbourhood tours (e.g., Barker & Weller, 2003; Crivello, Camfield, & Woodhead, 2009; Thomas, 2001). The Mosaic Approach, for instance, has been specifically developed to "listen to very young children" (Clark, 2001; see also, Clark & Moss, 2005; Clark & Statham, 2005).

(c) Hill (2006) studied children's perspectives on research methods that have children as participants. His findings of the study identify a number of preferences that children have as far as their participation in such research is concerned:

- "Children are attracted to methods that give very immediate pleasure. Thus, it is commonly reported that group discussions are fun, especially when there are activities and excises" (p. 80).
- "Alderson (2001b) observed that when children carry out their own research using interviews of groups, they tend to use exercises that help 'one another feel confident and relaxed'" (p. 80).
- A number of young people report that written questionnaires are boring . . . . This can evoke 'subversive' responses. It will come as no surprise to anyone who has conducted a questionnaire survey to know that a few admit giving false answers to make the experience more enjoyable" (p. 80).

These ranges of interest with which students do or might participate in research that intends to solicit their views on specific matters also need to be considered in the context discussed here, namely the provision of student voice in matters affecting them.

Principle 5

> *Principle 5*: Consider for the provision of student voice a recruitment and participation process that allows for participation from all sections of the student population that make up the focus of student voice.[16]

This principle is grounded in the following insight:

> Children and young people are not a homogeneous group. There is no single way to ascertain their views. The most excluded are, almost by definition, the hardest to reach. No one body can bring the full range of children's views to any one table." (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001, p. 16)

The focus of student voice is linked to the group of students affected by certain decisions or to whom a particular school matter is directly relevant. This can be all students of a school, or only students of a particular grade level, and so on. Relative to the focus of student voice linked to a particular issue, Principle 5 suggests that this non-homogeneity of the respective group of students is given consideration in the recruitment and participation process. This requires particular care in the recruitment and participation of marginalized students and student groups/sections, a point also made by excluded students themselves:

[16] The term "focus of student voice" has been explicated in the first part of this paper.

> Non-participants were usually more critical of youth forums, school councils and one-off events than participants. They identified both as a matter of principle and feeling that it was not right that adults were taking account of the views of only a small minority of people by top-down selection or self-nomination. (Hill, 2006, p. 76)

It lies in the nature of the status of marginalized students as being marginalized that their voice needs to be assumed to be potentially different from those students who are not marginalized. In other words, what justifies differentiation of a student body into student sections justifies also the assumption of non-homogeneity of voices and, thus, justifies a concern for an adequate representation of diversity of voices.

The marginalization status might sometimes also be linked to the need for alternative ways of participation. For instance, students who are and feel marginalized because they do not speak English fluently (in a dominantly English speaking school environment) might need alternative language options to fully participate and have voice; for students with physical exceptionalities "difficulties with physical access or written text or communication, or lack of suitable equipment may inhibit full participation" (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001, p. 16).

Principle 6

The literature on child participation in research provides evidence for the relevance of two specific aspects of any form of provision of student voice: who knows about whose voice and what happens with what one has shared as part of exerting one's voice. This leads to the following principle for consideration when planning for the provision of student voice:

> *Principle 6*: Consider the importance that confidentiality/privacy and feedback/follow-up might have for students in the process of providing for student voice.

The referenced literature suggests that for children confidentiality is of particular importance and linked to their sense of privacy relative to what their peers know and are allowed to know about them. As Hill (2006) found in his study on children's views on research methods, "children have voiced concerns about needing to let peers know their opinions or experiences in group discussions and the potential for others to see what you have written using a computer" (p. 82). The need for confidentiality becomes especially relevant when focus groups are used:

> Researchers have recognized that in focus groups with children, some may say little or nothing, especially when they did not know each other before (Mitchell, 1999). Increasingly, therefore, researchers speak with friendship groups or ask children to bring along friends . . . . Mayall (2000) found that younger children were more forthcoming when they were able choosing a friend to join in her conversations with them. Members of participatory groups have pointed to the greater ease they feel when they have 'stuff in common' with others present. (Hill, 2006, pp. 81-82)

Confidentiality, though, is not just a matter of peers being allowed to know one's voice as part of the process of the provision for student voice, but is also a matter of what happens with

one's contribution. To address this aspect of confidentiality/privacy more broadly, the Children and Young People's Unit (2001) suggests that

> children and young people need to be clear from the start about how the information and views they share with those working with them may be used. This should include a written protocol which children and young people can understand. (p. 17)

In addition to a particular sensitivity toward privacy/confidentiality among children, literature on student participation also suggests that "young people are primarily *outcome* oriented. When asked their views, they expect a response. Many are disappointed or disillusioned when nothing happens afterwards" (Hill, 2006, p. 72). The provision of follow-ups with and feedback for students, thus, should be an integral part of any process of providing for student voice. Any follow-up with students should be open and honest toward students about the possibilities and limitations of their involvement in a particular decision-making process and of the impact their participation can have on the decision-making (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001; Hill, 2006, p. 85). As the Children and Young People's Unit (2001) argues: "There will be occasions when it is not appropriate to involve children and young people in decision-making, for example because particular decisions have already been taken and cannot be reversed. Organisations should be open and honest in such circumstances" (p. 18). Such openness and honesty can be seen as part of a genuine interest in students' views that Principle 1 calls for.

Conclusion

This paper has addressed three core questions that arise if and when a school educational organization (e.g. a school or a school division) wants to or does provide for student voice: *What* do we mean by "student voice"? *Why* should we provide for student voice? *How* do we go about providing for student voice? With the responses provided to these three questions, the paper can help schools and school divisions plan, rationalize, implement, monitor, and assess the provision of student voice in their school or school division.

In the introduction, the paper's focus on student voice was embedded into the larger concern for student well-being. This link between student voice and student well-being suggests a general rationale for providing for student voice: students having voice in matters affecting them greatly contributes to or is part of what we mean by student well-being. What greater motivation do we need to make the provision of high level of student voice and the development of student-focused cultures of student voice a core concern for focus, practice and policy in school education?

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